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CHAPTER III

FAREWELL TO THE DEAD

AFTER spending three or four days weeping, and feasting, and dancing, the main body of mourners scatter to their homes, but the close kinsmen remain for a week or two sleeping at the home of the deceased, awaiting the ritual of farewell. The Nyakyusa themselves distinguish three main events in it: the 'picking up of pumpkin-seeds' (*ukusala inyungu*) when the chief mourners first begin to wash; the 'shaving of the sprouting hair' (*ukutemela ilitemelo*) when the beer of inheritance is brewed and the estate divided; and the 'ritual of the gasping cough' (*ingotolo*) when the widows, having lain with the heir, go to visit their parents. The details differ appreciably between Selya and MuNgonde on the one hand, and Kukwe country on the other, and we describe them separately.

I. IN SELYA AND MUNGONDE

(*a*) *The events*

i. '*Picking up pumpkin-seeds.*' The picking up of pumpkin-seeds begins with the formal recognition of the heir, if the deceased was a married man. The heir and widows are suddenly seized and hustled, resisting, into the mourning hut. If they go willingly 'it seems as if they wished their relative to die'. The officiant smears their chests with ash and puts a strand of the *ilingolongofwa* creeper on each one's right shoulder. These are both signs of mourning, and the creeper is also 'a sign that we have given him the inheritance'. After a few minutes the heir and widows are formally summoned to come out of the hut, and they go off to wash away the ash and creeper in the stream. But first, the flowering head of a banana is buried in the courtyard near the door of the mourning hut and the grave of the deceased. If he was not a married man and there are no widows to be inherited, the ritual begins with this. The banana flower is explicitly identified with the corpse: it must face in the direction from which the ancestors came, as the corpse does; if the deceased is a male the flowering head is from a plantain (*itoki*); if a female from a sweet banana (*injali* or *indefu* or

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765 768 796 [262] *iselya*); and it is wrapped in a leaf (of the same species as the flower) which represents a blanket. The symbolism is interpreted in terms of the habit of growth. A trunk of plantain or sweet banana flowers and fruits only once, then dies and is pruned away, being replaced by a sucker from the same root, hence the association between the flower and the corpse. *Ilitoki* is a large variety of plantain, eaten when it is green and hard; *injali* is a smallish banana eaten when it is ripe and sweet, and it takes nine months to develop. 'When an *injali* stem forms and a woman conceives a child at the same time, the bananas will be ripe and the woman bear her child together.' No one hesitated about this identification of plantain with male, sweet banana with female; it is as obvious in Nyakyusa as the associations of 'breeches' and 'petticoats' in English.

765 The officiant sprinkles a powdered medicine on to the earth of the grave and all the participants (that is, the heirs, widows, children, and certain siblings of the deceased) rub themselves in it. They rub forehead, right elbow, right knee, and right toe in the pile of earth. Only chiefs and their close relatives and twins refrain, for they have been drinking medicines, and such close contact with a corpse would 'spoil their medicine': 'The medicine would go rotten if they touched the grave which contains medicine,' so the chief's forehead, etc., must not touch the grave. He merely touches the earth with a finger-tip.

783 765 Having touched the earth, all the participants go to wash in a stream, and when they return they wash again ritually in the doorway of the mourning hut, the doctor pouring out medicated water from a small calabash and each participant catching the water in his hands and rubbing them and his mouth and knees with it. Then they oil themselves. Until this ritual they must remain dirty and dishevelled with the mud and ash of mourning on them, and any who steal away to wash are fined by the other relatives.

765 Next the officiant takes roasted bananas and sticks into each one or more pumpkin-pips (*inyungu*) and one or more lentils (*inandala*).[1] She half-buries these in the earth at the doorway of the hut, or sits in the doorway holding a banana near the ground, and each participant approaches in turn and stoops and bites off the banana, and eats it.

The *ulufumbo* (the litter of dry banana leaves on which the

[1] Some also add cowpeas (*imbange*), others oil-seeds (*inyemba*).

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764 by the dust, at some other funeral without having completed the
765 ritual for his own parents, and the danger of the 'gasping cough'
828 exists only when a widow, having lain with the heir, eats or drinks with her own relatives.

796 Everyone knows the connection between madness and the performance of the whole ritual and between coughing and the final act, but not everyone is conscious of the symbolism of the various events. For example, Mwakisisile, a middle-aged pagan man whom we knew well, could not interpret the details of the symbolism and he explained: 'Some ask about these things in the ritual, some do not ask. I have not asked. We only know, many of us, that in the ritual we drive the shade, who is here, away from the body, and that if we do not drive him away we run mad. But we do not understand the details of the ritual such as straining water through a leaf, or passing the baskets between the legs, so as to be able to say: "This detail means this." ' Those most conscious of the symbolism are the *abanyago*, the officiants at the family rituals and the priests of the communal rituals. Kasitile, the hereditary rain-maker of Selya, who was a close friend of Godfrey Wilson's, and formally presented him to his dead ancestors urging them 'not to be startled at a white face', was our foremost authority on the symbolism of the Selya ritual. He was more conscious of the symbolism than most people, but his interpretation was confirmed at almost every point by others. Kasitile was not paid for [124] information—none of our informants was—but he and Godfrey Wilson exchanged gifts from time to time in the manner customary among the Nyakyusa, and he often had a meal with us. Mwandisi, a very old blind chief living on the Lake-shore plain (MuNgonde) who was regarded by the Nyakyusa themselves as an authority on history and custom, was also a friend prepared to expound the [184] rituals. His interpretation contradicted Kasitile's on one point only—he denied that one purpose of the ritual was to bring back the shade into the house. Other informants, though less coherent, corroborated Kasitile's interpretation, which may therefore be taken as a general, not a personal one.

764 There are nine main themes in the ritual: first, the driving away
765 of the dead from the dreams of his close kinsmen, and measures to
796 prevent him 'brooding over them' (*ukobatela*)—the word is that used of a hen brooding over her chickens. Widows, in particular, must be separated from the shade of their husband before the heir (or any other man) dare have intercourse with them. Secondly, the

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identification of the mourners with the corpse and the separation of the shade from both of them. 'What they do to the participants they do to the deceased. . . . If they are not cleansed he is still muddy. . . . We throw away the corpse, the contamination of death, into the river . . . we drive the shade away off our bodies to join his fellows . . . we separate the corpse and the shade.' Thirdly, bringing back the shade as a beneficent spirit into the home. 'In the ritual we tell the shade to go away and join his fellows, and then to come back with them and warm himself by the fire in our house. . . . At first the shade is in our bodies, we cast him out . . . at first it is as if we were still holding the corpse in our arms, but we throw the corpse away into the river . . . the shade we bring back into our house.'

Fourthly, a miming of the actions of a madman in eating excrement as a prophylactic against behaviour of that sort. The dead, if not separated from the living, bring madness upon them, and simulating madness is a protection against it.

Fifthly, the corpse and faeces are identified: 'The corpse is filth, it is excrement. And so when a madman for whom they have not performed the ritual eats filth that is the corpse, he is still holding it, they have not done the ritual for him.'

Sixthly, the shades are identified with semen and seeds and their control over potency and fertility is recognized. The Nyakyusa think that they are always present in sexual intercourse, and symbols of sexual intercourse are interpreted as a means of driving out the shade from the participants' bodies.

Seventhly, 'the food which he hoed' is symbolically 'given to the shade' of the man who has just died and he is urged to be satisfied: 'You, shade, do not think there was little food at your ritual. . . . The food which we have eaten you have eaten . . . do not create hunger.'

Eighthly, the shade is acknowledged as a kinsman by eating with him food and beer mixed with *ikipiki*—the symbol of agnatic kinship—before he is driven away.

Lastly, a dead man is formally replaced by his heir, a woman by her sister or her brother's daughter.

These conceptions are expressed in the following texts which are given as they were recorded by Godfrey Wilson. No attempt has been made to systematize Kasitile's or Mwandisi's arguments, but the statements made during numerous sessions have been placed in sequence, and are separated only by dots.

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CHAPTER IX

THE NYAKYUSA CONCEPTION OF REALITY

(*a*) *The symbolic pattern*

796

AFTER these lengthy descriptions and interpretations of family rituals, we at last approach our goal, viz. an analysis of the symbolic pattern of the Nyakyusa people. Contrary to the commonly held theory that ritual is always more constant than interpretation, we find variations in the details of ritual related to variation in descent, but the conceptions expressed vary very little. Some symbols (such as the plantain representing a male and the sweet banana representing a female) occur in all the rituals; others are peculiar to one or other of the cultural groups, but recur in all, or several, of the rituals of that group. Our informants constantly made cross-references between different rituals; the more conscious were aware both of a recurrent symbolic pattern in the rituals of their own dialect group and of a common content with the rituals of other groups. It is clearly recognized, for example, that the foods used in ritual vary with the resources of the area; that the Kukwe cast away the shade by allowing pebbles placed between their fingers and toes to wash down-stream and by burning grass necklaces in which they have slept, while the Nyakyusa do it by throwing away a stem of bananas; in short, that differing ritual idioms express common sentiments.

The framework of all the rituals (save those of misfortune) is the *induction* with a formal laying of the litter of banana leaves in a hut into which the participant is brought to live apart from other people; the retreat or *seclusion* during which he lives and eats apart and is regarded as filthy, for he is 'brooded over' by the shades; and the *bringing out* when the shades are driven away and he is purified. During the seclusion not only is the participant filthy, but he *may* not wash or shave or use cosmetics; in the death ritual he embraces the corpse, smears himself with mud and ash, and mimes the actions of a madman, eating filth, casting off his clothes, and, in the Kukwe version, being mocked at as a fool. The madman is filthy like a corpse and mourners accept identi-

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fication both with corpse and shade. In other rituals the identification is with the shade alone, but still the participant is felt to be filthy and close to madness. The symbols of purification are many: clearing and burning the litter, burning the clothes or leaves worn during the seclusion, elaborate and repeated washing and shaving, and anointing the body with rouge and oil. One aspect of purification is the driving away of the 'filthy' shade symbolized first by throwing away pebbles or a stem of bananas into a running stream; and, secondly, by casting seeds into a pot which is put on the fire, grinding millet in the doorway and letting it fall on bark-cloth, putting various parts of the body on the fire symbolically and grinding them symbolically, passing a winnowing basket of millet between the legs, scattering millet, and dancing the trampling dance. The second group of symbols all represent sexual intercourse. Seed or grain is identified with semen, fire with intercourse, bark-cloth and the round winnowing basket—a woman's basket *par excellence*—represent the woman, and putting seeds on the fire, grinding, passing the basket of millet between the legs, and probably also the trampling dance[1] represent the sex act. The shade is thought to be ejected from the body as semen, and therefore intercourse is a means of driving the shade from the body.

An element of the death ritual is the separation of corpse and spirit, the final disposal of the corpse, and the bringing of the new shade back 'to warm himself with the other shades' at the family hearth: he is received as the water which drips from the doorway of the hut, and welcomed to the hearth with music; but the distinction between the corpse which is got rid of and the shade which is welcomed is not maintained systematically. Repeatedly our informants spoke of the shade (*unsyuka*) being driven away from dreams and waking thought, and from men's bodies, as well as being separated from the corpse. The aim of Nyakyusa ritual is not that union with God constantly sought in Christian ritual, but a separation both from the shades and the heroes; for close association with the pagan gods spells madness and death, not fullness of life. A measure of separation from the shades is a condition of fertility as well as of sanity. Intercourse cannot be fruitful until the shades of her father's lineage have 'moved aside a little' from the nubile girl, the shade of a deceased husband from his widow.

[1] The action of the trampling dance and the contexts in which it occurs at death and puberty suggest this, but such an interpretation was not explicitly given.

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We interpret the induction, seclusion, and bringing out as symbols of death and rebirth. There can be no doubt that the induction and seclusion represent death. Strewing leaves—or laying a litter—which is an essential act in every induction is a sign of misfortune and death;[1] and at the induction of a bride her 'mothers' sing: 'Go, go and never return', and 'We wail a dirge'. The mourners, the nubile girl, the mother of a new-born child, and the parents of twins are all 'filthy' and one with the dead; Kasitile said of mourners: 'We have died, we *are* the corpse.' The period of seclusion implies a sojourn with the shades, and our hypothesis is that it represents *both* death and gestation. The hut appears as a symbol of the womb in the pregnancy and 'gasping cough' rituals, and the doorway which 'belongs to the shades' is a symbol for the vagina. In the pregnancy ritual, passing through the doorway is explicitly interpreted as a symbol of birth, and in the death ritual mourners come out of the doorway stooping, and bump their heads against an obstruction. In the 'bringing out' in the death and puberty rituals, the mourners and the nubile girl run in and out of the doorway and water drops from the thatch. Kakune, the doctor, interpreted this as a symbol of the mourners' receiving the shade back on to their bodies. We interpret it, rather more widely, as a symbol of rebirth. Both men and spirit are reborn, the shade in the bodies of the participants.

All through the rituals the connection of the shades with potency and fertility is emphasized. They cause menstruation and sexual desire; they are present in intercourse and ejected as semen; they control conception; they control fertility in the fields. 'The shade and the semen are brothers.'[2] 'When they shake the millet and pumpkin-seeds (after ritual connection) the seed is semen . . . and it is the shade. . . .' The symbols of male and female, plantain and sweet banana, recur repeatedly. The wearing of them is explicitly interpreted as a symbol of fertility, and laying them together under the litter is perhaps a symbol of the marriage union, like eating the banana with *ikipiki* medicine. Intercourse between husband and wife is the culmination of the rituals of death, puberty, and twin birth, and is held to be essential to the health of

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 232.

[2] cf. Bhaca, *idlozi*: shade, semen (W. D. Hammond-Tooke, *A General Ethnographic Survey of the amaBhaca*. Unpublished thesis presented for the degree of Ph.D. in the University of Cape Town); Xhosa, *idlozi*: semen virile (A. Kropf, *Kaffir-English Dictionary*); Zulu, *idlozi*: departed spirit (C. M. Doke and Vilikazi, *A Dictionary of the Zulu Language*).

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796 775 831 the wife or the widow (even though she be old), as well as proof of the support of the shades for the husband or heir. A symbol of the ritual connection, the *ilibalaga*, is offered to the shades of both lineages. Indeed, the rituals of death and twin birth, as well as the ritual of puberty and marriage, may be interpreted as a celebration of the union of husband and wife. For the parents of twins the end of the ritual marks the resumption of married life after a break during which contact between them was felt to be dangerous; for a widow and the heir of a dead man the end of the death ritual marks the beginning of their union.

796 The admonition of a widow or the mother of twins on her proper behaviour as a wife,[1] like a girl at her first marriage, underlines the fact that the death and twin-birth rituals are, in a sense, also marriage rituals.

592 775 The parts of the homestead connected with the shades are: first, those associated with the procreative activities of husband and wife—the hearth, the bed, and the doorway of the hut. Prayer may be made at the hearth, and offerings are poured out on the hearth-bricks, or left overnight under the bed. 'The doorway is the shades' and much of the action in ritual takes place there. As has already been shown, the hearth is explicitly associated with the sexual life of husband and wife: hearth-bricks are planted at marriage, making fire by friction is a symbol of the marriage union, firewood is associated with a woman's reproductive capacity, and the hearth must not be approached by sexually active people other than the owner of the hut and her husband. The bed is the marriage bed. The doorway is identified with the vagina. Secondly, a defined grove of bananas, usually those nearest the doorway of the chief wife's hut, is thought to be frequented by the shades. It has been shown that plantains and sweet bananas are the symbols of male and female in all the rituals: in the sacred banana grove only plantains are grown. Bananas are propagated by suckers and the symbolism implied (but never explicitly stated) is that the root at which the offering of meat to the shades is placed represents the lineage which continually reproduces itself. What is explicit is that [778] the banana grove is sacred, and that offerings are placed or buried at the root of a banana plant. We were told: *'ilikemo*[2] *lyabatata*

[1] We did not see this at the twin ritual observed, but were told that the mother of twins was sometimes admonished by her husband's sisters.

[2] *Ilikemo*: a single banana plant from the sacred banana grove, a ritual killing of cattle in the sacred grove of a chief; *inyikemo*: sacrificial meat; *ifikemo*: Holy Communion (modern usage).

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kijenja, ko bikwiputa, the sacred place of the fathers is the banana grove, there they pray.'

The virility of a lineage is symbolized by the *ikipiki* medicine, interpreted as 'our blood' or 'semen'. With it mourners, menstruating girls, bride and groom, the new-born babies and their mothers are treated. To provide it or use it is to acknowledge agnatic kinship: husband and wife wash with it together in acknowledgement that the wife is now 'one blood' with her husband; the grandmother gives it to her son's child in acknowledgement of its legitimacy; in the death rituals the mourners eat food with it acknowledging their kinship with the shade. To belong to a lineage is to be protected practically and spiritually, and the *ikipiki* medicine is held to protect those who are 'empty' and weak—the 'hollow men'—from those who are 'heavy' with real semen or medicines.

The shade, *unsyuka*,[1] 'he who is risen from the dead', may be interpreted as the principle of life, but at the same time he is 'the one beneath', *ugwa pasi*, filthy, and fearful. What men worship is life; what they fear is death, corruption; and for the pagan Nyakyusa, as for the Christian,[2] the two are inextricably mingled. *Imindu* (sing. *ilindu*) means dirt, dust, rubbish, the litter of the seclusion hut, and also the shade. When '*mindu*' is cited as the cause of some disease it is the shades (as things rather than persons) which are meant: 'dust to dust' is an image of pagan as of Christian theology. We have spoken of the Nyakyusa disgust for filth (*ubunyali*), which is associated with a corpse, menstruation, childbirth, intercourse, faeces, and all these are identified in some fashion with the shade. Faeces 'go below to the land of the shades'. The hair of a corpse is the shade's, the hair of a girl at puberty is 'the filth of her menstrual blood'. In all the rituals the filth is buried, shaved off, burnt, washed away, and at the death ritual 'he who is risen' is brought 'to warm himself' at the family hearth, but yet he dwells in the earth and is 'dirty'.

The conception of impurity, uncleanness, associated with physiological functions of coition, excretion, menstruation, childbirth and death is, as we have already suggested, a very widespread one.

[1] *Ukusyuka*: to rise from the dead. For the noun the personal class is most commonly used, but some of the old men always spoke of *imisyuka* rather than *abasyuka*. A young man, commenting on this, explained: 'The shades are not people like us, but *imindu*', i.e. they are things—dust—not persons.

[2] 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' John xii, 24.

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783 The Nyakyusa perhaps emphasize it[1] more than their neighbours
[17] (though not more than the Jews or the Hindus), and their pre-
occupation with purification in the rituals is paralleled by the
emphasis laid on cleanliness (*ubwifyusi*) in person, in house and
courtyard, in cooking, and in disposal of excrement. Their ex-
treme cleanliness, in contrast with their neighbours, was remarked
upon by all the early travellers in the area and is still obvious.[1]
Houses and courtyards are swept and garnished; pots and dishes
scoured, food scrupulously covered with fresh banana leaves when
it is served at feasts; a good housewife is *umwifyusi*, she who is
clean. Men wash daily in running water and children are trained
to take a hoe with them when they go to defaecate, and to bury
the faeces.

783 The horror of 'filth' is very closely associated with the fear of
158 madness, which is at the same time a fear of too close association
828 with the dead. It is when the dead have not been driven away, but
return in dreams; when the necessary separation of living and
dead has not been achieved, that men go mad. Madness is most
often spoken of as the penalty for neglect of the death ritual, but
it is not, in theory, confined to that: 'All the rituals are the same,
if they are neglected, men will become mad.' Besides madness,
men fear sterility, debility, swollen limbs ('an unhealthy fatness')
and diarrhœa 'to get rid of the filth in the belly' if the rituals are
neglected, or taboos broken.

●796 That a common symbolic pattern expressing common senti-
ments recurs in all the rituals is clear, but it is also true that each
ritual is characterized by peculiar sentiments and symbols. The
funeral rites are first and foremost an expression of grief—kinsmen
and neighbours gather to weep for the dead. Their grief is sym-
bolized by the stylized wailing, the passionate dancing, the smear-
ing with mud and ash, wearing mourning belts, and the song of fare-
well at the hearth. It is true that, in the later stages of the funeral,
friends seek to comfort the chief mourners with cheerful songs and
dances, and in one aspect the funeral ritual is an assertion of life,
but grief not joy is its dominant note. By contrast, the ritual of
puberty and marriage is a rejoicing—rejoicing 'because our child
has grown up', because she is virgin, because there is feasting,
because there is a marriage.

881 Elements peculiar to the puberty ritual are the celebration of
virginity by killing a bull, and the prayer for blessing when its

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 77–8.

[1] [i.e., the conception of impurity associated with physiological functions.— Analyst]

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meat is offered in the bride's father's grove; the two symbols of first intercourse—treatment with *undumila* medicine and jumping over fire; the recognition of the end of childhood by calling on the bride's mother to put her down off her back; the insistence that she show modesty before her father and his fellows as before a father-in-law; and the taboo on crossing water lest her menstrual flow become like a river.

The twin ritual is characterized by the fear of infection from too great potency, and the treatment with scalding medicines to 'burn' the twin birth.

Sometimes our informants gave different interpretations of the same symbol and there was no agreement between them, as with the stem of bananas stolen in the Kukwe death ritual, and the bunch of flowers brought back from the stream. Nsyani said stealing the bananas symbolized that 'we may now eat other people's food', and Mwamulenga that it was a symbol of driving away disease. Kakune, the doctor, interpreted the bunch of flowers brought back from the stream as a symbol of the shade which was brought home; Mwamulenga saw picking and carrying flowers as yet another symbol of the actions of a madman. Though there was general agreement over the interpretation of many symbols, it is possible that some have no commonly accepted meaning, but suggest different things to different people. It is clear, however, that with the Nyakyusa, as with ourselves, one symbol has often several associations for the same person, and Kasitile and the more self-conscious of our informants were aware of this. For Kasitile the banana in the death ritual is the corpse and the pumpkin-seeds in it the shade; it is also faeces which madmen eat; it is also, in the puberty ritual, the male organ and the seeds are the semen. Eating a banana is a symbol *both* of copulation and of the actions of a madman. Conversely, the same object or action is symbolized in many different ways—there are nine or ten symbols of sex intercourse, and twenty of driving away the shade, recorded in the texts quoted above.

When an action recurs in different rituals, informants almost always interpreted it in the same way in each context: the exception was the trampling dance (*ukukanya inganya*) interpreted as a way of 'driving away the shade' in the death ritual and a 'rejoicing' in the puberty ritual. It was always explained as 'customary'. 'Father and grandfather did it.'

This brings us to the ultimate explanation given for all the

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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new-comers, and drove out undesirables; but always with the concurrence of the council. 643 645

7. He gave periodical feasts to all chiefs and their followers.

8. In general, it was the duty of Chungu to keep the land in peace; but no decision of his was valid without the approval of his council.

In the north, across the Songwe, the failure to attain unity of control had as its natural consequence the failure to attain the same imposing ceremonial as at Karonga. The chiefs each retained his independence, and what has now to be said applies equally to the independent chiefs of the north, and to those of the south who were at one time under the dominion of Chungu. 643

A convenient starting-point is the installation of the heir and successor of a chief. The installation of Reuben, which began on 18th September, and ended on 19th November, 1921, is typical of all, and the description which follows was given to me by himself. 643 644 796

On the appointed day he left his home, and accompanied by eight young men who were to be his subordinate chiefs, and official dreamers, and all the young men of his father's principal village, he went to the place which was to be the site of his own village. There good huts were built for him and the eight young chiefs, and mere shelters for the others. The first item in a long ceremonial was the tree-planting. The medicine man took two pots into which he put two *imbigita* (lion-making medicines), and having filled the pots with earth, he planted a young

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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643 644 •796 seedling in each, *indola* in one, and *imbandapanda* in the other. Pits to receive the pots were digged by the doctor, and held in position by the two most important of the subordinate chiefs, who, with closed eyes, filled in the soil all around. The two *imbigita* become later the two lions of the young chief. Every chief has these mysterious lions, which are quite harmless except to evil-doers; if any common person creates or controls a lion, it is the duty of these two to slay it. No one may eat food at harvest time until a portion has been set aside for these lions. The two trees in time provide the shade under which the chief's court will sit, and as long as they stand his residence must not be removed from their neighbourhood.

The doctor now took a broom, and swept the dust into the faces of Reuben and his subordinates, praying that the men under them would be in number as the dust of the earth. All the old fires were extinguished, [372] and new fire was made by the young chief and his fellows; at present from two pieces of wood rubbed together, but in the past, the lower was the bone of a leopard or lion specially dried for the purpose. In the old warlike days this fire kindled the courage of the chiefs, but with the peace that has been brought in by the white men such courage is not called for. From the fire thus made, brands were given out to all householders in the district, and no ashes from old fires were allowed to remain in any house.

Next came the great medicine drinking, which was to give authority to the new chiefs. It is indeed a

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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fearsome mixture: ground flesh of *inyifwira* (the flying serpent); heart and nose of hyena, which enables one to see danger ahead; heart of hawk, giving power to see danger from behind; and heart of the fish-eagle, which swoops down upon its prey. Thus furnished the young rulers can foresee the future, deal with the present, and be a terror to all evil-doers. This powerful medicine is drunk by all chiefs at their installation, and spread under the beds to make them see in dreams what is coming in the future. But never may the chief eat food that is not freshly cooked, for that would take away all virtue even from these potent drugs.

From that time until the 19th November, the young men led a happy, care-free life. Their food was daily provided; cattle were set apart for them; they did not shave all that time, and no girls were allowed to go near them. On the closing day of the ceremonial, the fathers of all the young rulers came and stood at a distance, and the younger brother of Reuben was given a spear with which he knocked on the closed door of the hut in which Reuben and his companions were waiting, and called out, "There is war outside; come out." Immediately all rushed to where the elders were standing, and after greetings, the company formed itself into a boundary commission, to fix the limits of Reuben's authority. Finally, the same day, the new chief was married to the two girls whose offspring will be his successors. They must be daughters of men of note, not cowards in battle, of no reproach in the tribe; and the girls

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

MAIN CULTURAL FEATURES

Religion

769 The ancestor cult was the main feature of Ngonde religion. As long as a man had alive a father, father's full brother, or a senior brother, this senior kinsman dealt with the ancestral spirits, not only on his behalf, but also on behalf of his wives and children. In the absence of sickness or misfortune no appeal was made to the spirits. If the diviner diagnosed anger of the ancestors as cause, the senior kinsman had to pray for the sick one. If the half-brothers lived at a distance from each other after the death of their father and uncles, each might pray to the spirits to cure a little sickness, but if it persisted a message had to be sent to the senior kinsman. Wrongs which aroused the anger of the spirits were usually breaches of family morality, insult to a father, neglect of responsibilities by an heir. Offerings consisted of a bull, hen, or beer in the case of commoners, a cow in the case of a chief. The worship of dead chiefs as such was not connected with everyday morality. On the offering of cows by chiefs to their immediate ancestors depended the food and health of the chiefdom and the fertility of women and cows.[1]

769 643 Each Kyungu was buried in the valley around Mbande, and the grave was planted with trees, making a sacred grove. In times of drought and widespread sickness, sacrifices were made at the graves under the guidance of a diviner.[2] An insult to the living Kyungu was believed to cause a drought. Each chief or noble was believed to be able to avert local misfortunes for his own people, and the land of every family participated in the divinity of his own ancestors. The great commoners of each chiefdom were believed to have independent access to his ancestral spirits, and so to have a hold upon him. The nobles of Ngonde had a similar power over the Kyungu.

643 As the Kyungu's health was bound up with the welfare of the community, elaborate precautions to maintain his health and to protect him from the danger of sexual impurity were taken, and when he ailed he was killed by suffocation.[3]

778 Sacred lagoons by the lake were associated not with the ancestors, but with a vague supreme deity, *Mbumba*.[4]

796 There were two important annual rituals for the whole tribe in addition to the special sacrifices to avert misfortune. One was the clearing out of the ashes each year after the break of the rains, which was performed on the order of the Kyungu, given through the nobles of Ngonde. The second was the elaborate first-fruits ceremony: fruits were offered by the nobles of Ngonde, in the grove of the last dead Kyungu, and then by the great chiefs, each in the grove of his own predecessor. The nobles and the chiefs of the hills had similar rituals, but they were not synchronized with those of the plain.[5]

Witchcraft

759 626 The Ngonde believe that certain men and women have the power of harming their neighbours and neighbours' cattle without taking any overt action. The witchcraft is hereditary, and of particular virulence if inherited through the mother.[6] Witches exert their influence at night in dreams. There are two kinds of witches, *mwanaga*, defender

[1] Wilson, A., 1938, pp. 156–7; A., 1938, p. 80; Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 137 and 138, also Ch. VII.
[2] Wilson, A., 1938, pp. 89–90.
[3] Ibid., p. 30; Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 158–60.
[4] Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 130–80.
[5] Ibid., pp. 32–8.
[6] Wilson, A., 1938, pp. 99–100.

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693 769 778 Nor were rain and health the only blessings which were sought in the sacred groves round Mbande, general fertility, the peace of the country, the absence of rats and the success of the ivory trade were believed to depend in part on the favour of the dead Kyungus. And we have a little evidence that some of these other blessings also were believed to be withheld by the anger of a living Kyungu.

The religious powers of dead and living Kyungus, however, were only believed to be effective in the Ngonde plain; the fiefs of the hills, certainly, and, as far as we know, the chiefdoms of the Nyondos and Kamemes also, were unaffected by them. And this fact is correlated with the slighter secular hold which Mbande had over the hills as compared with the plain.

769 786 Two notable religious rituals of the plain must now be mentioned. It was customary, first, to clear out the ashes (*ukujola ifikungu*) each year after the break of the rains. In traditional belief the spirits of the ancestors, whether of chiefs or of commoners, were closely associated with the fires in the houses of their descendants; and so it was only by clearing out the old fires regularly that the spirits and their potential anger could be driven away. Every religious ritual which deals with the ancestors, whether in Ngonde or among the Nyakyusa, has the function of driving them away. For, while the Christians believe that sustained communion with God may be a blessed state, the pagans in Ngonde and among the Nyakyusa believe that sustained communion with the ancestral spirits is always terrible and dangerous; prophecy may flow from it, but if the communion is not broken, if it continues too long, then evil will result; and prophecy is nearly always prophecy of evil. In pagan belief the spirits of the dead come constantly to "hound" on man and his works and have constantly to be satisfied and driven away by ritual.

[787] "Always they used to clear-out the ashes at the new year, at the first hoeing, at the break of the rains in December. They feared that death and disease would spread through the land if they continued living with the old fires, that the spirits in the ground, both the spirits of chiefs and of commoners, would be angry; let them drive the spirits away, and hoe in peace. They always remembered to do so each new year; for the old men used to keep these things in mind continually, they never forgot. The Kyungu would summon the whole country to clear out the ashes; and then they would hoe in peace. And at other times too, if prophecy came on someone, they would clear out the ashes again."

The tribes of Ngonde approached the Kyungu and he gave the order to clear out the ashes; messages were sent to the great chiefs and

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the senior territorial nobles of the plain, and they told their juniors. A sacrifice was made in one of the sacred groves of the Kyungus and all fires in the whole Ngonde plain were put out. And then "all the chiefs from every country near Mbande and the nobles and all the great-commoners and all the ordinary men and the women too went to Kyimbwe." At Kyimbwe, which is a cross-roads in the bush, they threw away the ashes of their old fires; while those few people who could not get to Kyimbwe threw them away near their own houses on the same day as the others. At Kyimbwe new fire was made with fire-sticks by the nobles of Ngonde and distributed to the whole plain in order. Great chiefs and senior nobles took it first and passed it to their juniors, chiefs passed to great-commoners, and in each group the common people got it from their own ruling noble or their own great-commoner.

And then, later in the year when the first maize and the first pumpkin leaves were ready to eat, an elaborate first-fruit ceremony was carried out. The first-fruits were offered by the nobles of Ngonde in the grove of the previous Kyungu, the one who had last died. "Then the great chiefs would do so next—Kalonga, Mwakasungula, Mwembelo, Katamba and the chiefs of Ngana also, each in his own sacred grove (i.e. at the grave of his own predecessor in the title). . . . . And then after them everyone, both chiefs and people, each at his father's grave. All offered first-fruits to their own spirits. And finally they would eat themselves, each with his chief wife. But beforehand they would not eat for fear of angering the spirits."

These two rituals concerned the plain alone; the nobles and chiefs of the hills are said to have had similar rituals of their own but they were not synchronized with or dependent upon those of the plain.

In time of tribal war also the Kyungu and the nobles of Ngonde led the people in prayer. All chiefs and nobles were summoned from the plain and the great ones entered the Kyungu's house to receive their instructions: "When he had finished speaking he would tell them to go to pray. So they would leave his house and gather all together, all chiefs and men, and pray. The premier noble of Ngonde would begin, asking each of the sacred groves of the Kyungus in turn to bless them in the fight. And then the great chiefs would pray after them" (each addressing his own predecessors in his title). The territorial nobles did not pray, for it was the royal family alone whose spirits were then addressed. Here again it was the plain alone that was concerned.

Now this organization of religious ritual in the Ngonde plain was both a factor of and itself determined by the general political

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structure. We shall see in later sections how many details of the secular power of Mbande and of the lesser authorities were dependent upon their religious functions. But the reverse is equally true. Among the Nyakyusa, where the hierarchy of chiefs had scarcely any secular content at all, the organization of religious ritual was far less elaborate. Cattle were sent to Lubaga by the other chiefs to be sacrificed for rain and health; but the "clearing out of the ashes" was done by each chiefdom separately; there was no general first-fruit ritual at all;[1] while, as war was never waged on a tribal basis, prayers and sacrifices for military success were always undertaken by each warring chiefdom alone.

Besides the Kyungus the great chiefs of Ngonde also were believed to be able to avert local droughts and misfortunes in their districts by offerings to their own immediate ancestors; and the lesser chiefs likewise and the territorial nobles—each in his own little area. While among the territorial nobles, the original owners of the land had wider powers. It will be remembered that to them the first Kyungu is said to have given head-cloths and asked for their prayers. Sometimes people would prophesy future misfortune "at Kisindile", or "at Kaluma" or "at Ifumbo," or would prophesy of present misfortunes that such was their source. Then the territorial noble concerned[2] would be formally visited by the nobles of Ngonde, and he and they together would offer sacrifice to his ancestors on behalf of all Ngonde.

And then also there were sacred lagoons near the lake—Ntbola, Kambwe, Kibondo, Mulale and Katindi. They were associated not with ancestral spirits at all but with a vaguely defined supreme deity named Mbamba. And beside them also prayers and sacrifices were made from time to time by the nobles of Ngonde.

Over these other spiritual powers we need not linger, save to notice one most significant fact. The participation by the Kyungu in the divinity of his ancestors was no isolated phenomenon in Ngonde. The head of every family in the country, whether of chiefs or commoners, was similarly placed; in his own family and, in the case of a chief or noble, in his own area too, he was both a priest and a demigod; he dealt with the spirits and by virtue of his relation to them shared their powers; his anger could curse. The Kyungus were but the greatest of many divinities. And thus there was in theistic ritual a high degree of local and family autonomy; local or family misfortunes

[1] Particular people among the Nyakyusa carried it out: reigning chiefs, senior great-commoners, prophets, and any person whose birth was held to be due to magical treatment of a previously barren woman. But only they.

[2] Mwene-kisindile, Mwene-kaluma, Mwene-ifumbo etc.

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The Chiefdom and Wider Groups

(a) The "Coming Out"

128 Space forbids a full description of the relationships of villagers in all their intricate detail, but a short description of the "Coming Out" (*ovoweka*) which is at the same time the most important legal act and the most exciting ceremonial of Nyakyusa life, will, I hope, make the nature of the age-village completely clear, and will also provide us with an easy transition to the discussion of the organization of the chiefdom (*ekisu*).

622 631 I have never seen a "Coming Out" properly; on one occasion I travelled to see one and arrived just a day late when all the important action and ceremonial was over, but I have had it fully described to me at different times by several people. Every chief (*omulafyale*) is normally succeeded in his chieftainship by two sons, who divide his country between them. There are sometimes exceptions to this: in very large chiefdoms three or even four sons sometimes succeed, each taking a portion of the country; and in minor chiefdoms, that is in small chiefdoms which have come under the dominion of a neighbouring and powerful chief, only one son of the minor chief succeeds to the whole of that country.[14] But the rule is that two sons divide the country of their father. This rule worked well in the old days, for till quite lately the Nyakyusa have been an expanding people in a district too large for their needs; and the combined countries of the two sons nearly always, in the old days, covered a greater area of effective occupation than the country of their father which they had divided. Now saturation point is approaching, or has come, and the rule makes for ever smaller and smaller chiefdoms. Various forces are tending to the alteration of the rule, but it is still a vital part of the constitution. (*vide infra.*)

The "Coming Out" (*ovoweka*) is a series of legal acts by which the country of an old chief and his great commoners is, with certain reservations, divided and handed over into the possession and control of his two sons and their respective great commoners. These legal acts are accompanied by much pomp and ceremony. It is at once the initiation of all the youth of the old chiefdom into public life, the constitution of two new political units and the proclamation of two new chiefs. The "Coming Out" not only consists of a series of legal acts and public ceremonies, but of religious ritual as well, action is taken to increase the personal qualities appropriate in a chief and his great commoners by magical means.

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[14] These minor chiefdoms have nothing to do with the present system of subordinating some chiefs to others (*vide infra*, sec. (b)).

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are redrawn and only the fields in old craters (the most prized and fertile of all) are not re-allotted. Thus the villages of kinsmen of two generations adjoin, and often those of three generations.

On the old chief's death his village headmen become priests of the grove in which he is buried, and, in co-operation with his sons, the new chiefs, sacrifice there on behalf of the two countries into which his old chiefdom is divided. There is a nice balance of power between chief and village headmen in life, and when he dies his two heirs and the headmen (or their heirs) continue to share power, the power which belief in his spiritual force and their ability to guide it gives them. The success or failure of rituals is held largely to depend upon the personal relationships of the leading participants, chiefs and commoner priests.

Besides the ordinary commoner priests (the village headmen of a past generation or their heirs) there are priests of the chiefs' lineage, usually belonging to a junior line to which specific ritual functions, such as rain-making, have been entrusted, and whose office is hereditary in the same way as that of a chief. Kasitile (86),[1] the rain-maker, is such a priest: his grandfather was the brother of a ruling chief (43) and had been appointed as rain-maker (*umpelafula*) and priest (*unyago*), the two functions being separate but overlapping. As rain-maker Kasitile tended the rain stones, as priest he initiated the rituals in certain of the sacred groves, though he did not actually officiate himself. Kasitile was a key informant on ritual and a chapter is devoted to his history, since it epitomizes the relationships between chiefs and commoners.

As we have shown, most of the Nyakyusa and Ngonde chiefs claim some sort of kinship with one another. Those who are nearly related pray together at the groves of their common ancestors, and those more distantly connected join in sacrifice to their founding fathers, but in the communal rituals kinship is neither the dominant theme nor the exclusive principle of association, as it is in the rituals celebrated by private persons. In the communal rituals most of the priests are commoners unrelated to the dead who are honoured, and the sacrifices are held to benefit not only the descendants of the dead, but all those who live in the countries they once ruled. Nevertheless, the symbolism of the communal rituals constantly recalls that of the rituals of kinship; themes which pervade the death ritual recur again in the rituals of 'coming out' and 'cleansing the country'. This background is

[1] Numerals after a name refer to the genealogy of Nyakyusa chiefs facing p. 3.

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accessible in an earlier book, *Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakyusa*,[1] and the details need not be recapitulated here.

Perhaps the reader has already noted a certain difficulty over tenses: 'is' tends to merge into 'was'. When we first visited BuNyakyusa in 1934 missionaries of various denominations had already been at work, and a foreign government in control, for forty years past. Between 1934 and my last visit in 1955 the changes have been great, but I use the present tense for things seen at first hand, whether earlier or later, and a separate chapter is devoted to the twenty years' change. It is well to recognize at the outset, however, that in 1934 the sanctity and power of the 'divine kings' was already questioned and their rituals were curtailed, and even the pagan cosmology of the Nyakyusa was beginning to exhibit traces of Christian influence. One striking example was the changing, or rather the fluid, connotation of the name *Kyala*.

Two new types of organization developed in BuNyakyusa with the arrival of the Europeans: churches which are based on a principle of association wholly new to the pagan tradition—common belief as opposed to kinship or contiguity; and a centralized system of government. To these have now been added trading concerns, of which the most important are co-operative societies exporting coffee and rice.

The subject of this book is (i) the traditional rituals celebrated on behalf of chiefdoms and groups of chiefdoms, and (ii) the changing ideas and values apparent as a section of the Nyakyusa turn from paganism to Christianity. In the concluding chapters an attempt is made to demonstrate the links between the changes in social structure and the changes in ritual.

[1] Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakyusa*, 1957.

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the house of Mwamalunguka, a hereditary priest of Lubaga (whose ancestor came with the first Lwembe (*vide* p. 8). There were present five chiefs of Mwakisisya's (56) line, including Mwanjala II (78), who represents the Lwembe, but is ailing and has never been installed; two Kinga priests and a Kinga messenger sent to escort them; four priests of Lubaga (including Mwamalunguka himself), Kasitile the priest of Selya, and Godfrey Wilson.

Mwanjala brought a small black bull worth 12*s*., bought with the money and a hoe provided by the Kinga, and sent for a stem of bananas and a flask of fresh milk. A rowdy discussion began about the procedure: 'In the old days we used to pour whey over our hands to wash them, and to wash our mouths, and in the sacred grove we would pour it away. . . .' Then the party went to a small grove surrounded by cultivated land, and Nsyanigwa, the Kinga priest, stopped at the stump of a tree, still alive, on the edge of the grove, saying: 'This is the *umpandapanda* tree [a *ficus* planted at the coming out of a chief] where we used to pour the beer,' but Mwanjala denied it saying 'No, they have hoed over it, the tree was here in the bean patch.' After some dispute they agreed to go right into the grove to sacrifice. The grove is on the site at which the trees were planted at the 'coming out' of Mwakisisya (56) the last Lwembe, and the house of his senior wife, Njala, was built. She is buried there, where her swept courtyard used to be, and during Mwakisisya's lifetime the beer used to be poured out beside this sacred tree. The last sacrifice here was when Kissoule was a boy (1885-90), hence the uncertainty as to the place, but just why the beer sacrifices had all been at the homestead of Kitega (*vide supra*) was not clear.

Nsyanigwa (the Kinga priest) asked Mwamalunguka (the priest of Lubaga) to bring over the three calabashes, one of millet beer, one of milk and one of bamboo beer, but Mwamalunguka refused and Nsyanigwa had to fetch them himself. It was the Kinga who had insisted on the Nyakyusa providing millet beer saying: 'If we first pour out our bamboo beer we will go off with all the fertility of the country, let them begin with theirs.' Mwanjala, summoned by Nsyanigwa, came and stood at the foot of the tree while Nsyanigwa poured millet beer first into his hands and then at the foot of the tree, and the priests prayed, Mwanjala and Nsyanigwa in Nyakyusa, Kikungubeja in Kinga:

Oh thou Mwambipili, thou Kissoule, thou Mwamalunguka,[1] thou

[1] Three hereditary priests of Lubaga.

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782 796 Lwembe, this is your millet beer, we complain of hunger, oh thou Mwampondele (27), thou Lwembe.

Then the milk was poured likewise and again they prayed for milk and calves, for children and health:

Here is your milk . . . may the locusts pass, may sickness be slight, may milk be plentiful, may the cows calve!

Finally the bamboo beer was poured out, too, and both the Kinga priests prayed in Kinga speaking of hunger. Mwanjala, instructed by Nsyanigwa, took some bamboo beer into his mouth and blew it three times in different directions, saying, between blowing: 'May the rain come.'

The bull was killed by Mwanjande (?). Nsyanigwa first gave the axe and knife to Mwanjala saying: 'This axe and knife [an unhafted and very old spearhead] I, Nsyanigwa, brought from BuKinga to kill the bull, go and kill it.' Mwanjala asked: 'Shall I not give the axe to my younger brother?' and Nsyanigwa replied: 'Yes, give it to him.' So Mwanjala gave it to Mwanjande who killed the bull with one blow at the back of the head. Mwansasu (a commoner priest) cut up the carcass, collecting the first stream of blood in a pot. Then the sacred meat was taken from the fore-
[778] legs, that from the right leg being placed on a plantain leaf, that from the left on a leaf of sweet banana. It was cut up and carried by Kitega (heir of 57?), who walked behind Mwanjala and the two Kinga priests, to the tree where they had poured the beer and milk. Mwanjala turned to the group of those sitting talking and shouting and said: 'Friends, a spear will go to the shades
[769] [i.e. the shades will be offended by your noise], be quiet', and they fell silent until the offering of meat was made. Then Mwanjala scraped a hollow in the cleared earth at the root of the tree with his foot and threw into it seven or eight pieces. He and the Kinga prayed, while Kitega stood silently holding the rest of the meat:

Oh thou Lwembe, thou Mwampondele (27), stand by us, this is your bull. . . . Give us children, milk, cattle, food; may sickness be slight . . . stand by us.

All this meat was taken from the plantain leaf—the men's portion. At the end, as they walked away Kitega asked: 'What about the women's meat?' And Mwanjala repeated his question. The Kinga replied: 'Are there two sacred places? No! There is no sacrifice

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to the women here, but to their husbands.' So Kitega took back to the tree the sweet banana leaf, containing the portion for the women. 782 796

Meanwhile strips of meat had been roasted and were eaten with roast bananas, while the milk was finished up by the Nyakyusa present. All the millet beer had been poured out, but the bamboo beer that remained was finished, part drunk, part blown from the mouth by the two Kinga boys, grandsons of the priests. Then the rest of the meat was divided up, one back leg being given to the Kinga. But they took the head (their traditional right) as well, without being given it. There was some considerable protest at this: 'Do you take twice?' they were asked. And more protest still when they began to go away with it. Nsyanigwa (the Kinga priest) replied furiously. 'Let it go, let them take it' was the final comment of the local people, but both parties were angry. Two legs went to the chiefs, one to the Nyakyusa commoners, and the breast to Mwanjala.

After the meat had been safely disposed of Nsyanigwa gave his parting instructions: 'You sirs (*batwa*), thank you, thank you. We remember that it was Mwakalukwa (the Kinga chief) who said "Pray for us"! Thank you! We thank you! Now you must build your chief, Mwanjala (78), a little hut in which to sleep with the breast of beef so that the lord (*kyala*)[1] may eat, and in the morning if *kyala* has eaten let him go to his home. This calf I brought, I Nsyanigwa, from BuKinga. Let the knife I brought remain with it too.' Then Nsyanigwa went off and his advice was discussed. Mwanjala laughed and said: 'I have no house to sleep in . . . shall I sleep by myself? Outside?' Several suggested that it was the custom for some other man to accompany him. No one knew who should do so, but someone suggested Kissoule. In fact Mwanjala went home with the breast of beef and did not remain overnight in the grove. But he and the priests held apart from their wives and children. Mwamalunguka (the priest) explained: 'We avoid sleeping with our wives for three nights. It is taboo to go to them. We say, "Let us wash and anoint ourselves and be alone until that lord (*kyala*) has gone out of our bodies, since we were in the ritual". We bathe tomorrow and the next day and anoint ourselves, but avoid our wives for three nights. Also our children are anointed on the forehead with medicine—the young

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[1] The name *kyala* had not been used in the invocation, and the only references to him in this ritual were the two just quoted.

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782 children, not the married ones with wives. Kissoule and I both
796 have our children anointed now.'
[783] This ritual was not complete because Mwanjala shirked the
[643] crucial act of remaining in the grove until a python licked him.
[793] The Kinga priests were continually nagging at the Nyakyusa for
[177] their failure to provide an acceptable Lwembe, but it is doubtful whether in 1935 Mwanjala II would have been acceptable to any of them since he was old and ailing. It was Mwakilima (111) that men wanted and he steadily refused to be installed.

[787] The next ritual observed at Lubaga was in March 1937. An ordinary commoner of Selya (not a priest) named Kijaja had been prophesying repeatedly: 'I do not sleep, you will not eat the crops you hoe if you do not go to Lubaga.' He was taken to his village headman and thence to the chief Mwaihojo (147) who finally, two years after he had begun prophesying, agreed to find a bull. Word then came to Kasitile (86) who notified the commoner priests of chief Mwaipopo (116) and sent a message to the priests of Lubaga. Kasitile (86), together with three other priests of Selya (Mwalukuta, Nyama, Mwamakunda) and Godfrey Wilson, set off early one morning from Kasitile's house to take the bull (brown streaked with black, called *ingombe isolola*) to Lubaga. On the way they called in at Munyoso's house, where the Kinga stop on their journey to pour a libation of beer (*vide supra*, p. 27). Kasitile asked Munyoso, 'Shall the bull enter?' and he replied, 'Yes, let it come into the house', so it was tied up inside while the party talked with Munyoso. He was sick and did not want to accompany them. The others pressed him, and at first he refused. Whereupon Mwalukuta said: 'Very well, then, we are at your place, let the bull return and we will go another day', in other words, refusing to go without him. 'No, that is taboo,' said
[784] Kasitile, 'once the bull has faced towards Lubaga and entered a house here it is taboo for it to turn back. The shades will be angry.' And so Munyoso went with them.

On the way they passed a group of men hoeing hard. One of them called out: 'Where are you going with that bull? Where are you off enjoying yourselves?' 'Ah, you fellows,' answered Kasitile, 'do you ask where we are going? We visit where our fathers always did.' They understood at once. 'Oh thank you, thank you,' they cried. 'You,' went on Kasitile, 'do you call that work? Are you growing your own food? No, you lie still and eat without effort. It is *we* who exert ourselves for you' (implying

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that their crop depended upon sacrifices at Lubaga). But five minutes later, as if to illustrate the constant co-existence of dogma and science, of economic and ritual effort, Kasitile commented on a very uneven field of millet saying: 'Its unevenness is due to the rubbish heaps. Where they burnt the rubbish the millet has grown well', as indeed it had.

The party went to the house of Mwakisopile, priest of Lubaga, and after a polite interval for greetings and small talk Kasitile proceeded to explain his business. 'The sky has changed its temper towards us, we do not sleep (*Kumwanya kutusambukile, tutikugona*). Therefore I said to myself, "Let me go to my father, let me go to my mother." I have come to ask for bananas, and for maize.' So the host sent messages to Mwanjala III (79) and the priests Mwamalunguka and Kesa. Mwanjala II (78) and Kissoule the chief priest of Lubaga, were away from home. Kasitile had long been ailing (*vide infra*, pp. 121-41) and Kesa asked after his health. 'The sky has changed its temper towards us', repeated Kasitile, implying that his illness was connected with Lubaga, and hinting at the quarrel between the priests and men of Mwakisisya (56) of Lubaga and the priests and men of the chief Mwaipopo of Selya (*vide infra*, pp. 37-8). Mwakisopile (the host) repeated to Kesa the reason for the visit. 'Mwamukinga (i.e. Kasitile 86),' he said, 'and Mwalukuta and Mwamakunda declare they do not sleep. They have come to ask for bananas and maize and children, and that the cattle may increase.' Kasitile added, 'The sky has made us still and silent. We long for the grove: since Mwakisisya (56) died we have wished for it. We have come to beg. I lie down wrapped in mats but the cold will not leave me. So I said to myself, "Let me go to my father, let me go to my mother." I am hungry. Have I food? The earth is destroyed.'

Then Kesa and Mwakisisya (111) replied: 'We are astonished that the people of Selya don't sleep. We have heard nothing about it. I, Mwakisisya sleep all right. And only Mwakalobo (67 or heir) and Mwankuga (94) these two alone of all the Selya chiefs came to me. Most of the men in Selya insult us! Ask them who has remembered that they should sacrifice here?'

Kasitile answered: 'It was I, Mwakisambwe (30, i.e. Kasitile speaks as his great grandfather) who initiated it.'

Kesa: 'Yes, but who agreed to give you an animal?'

Kasitile: 'It was Mwalubange, it was Kajula (i.e. the chief Mwaihojo, 147).'

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He also admitted that the people of Selya had insulted the Iwembe, 'But,' he added, 'we have heard that Mwakisisya (111) himself, when someone does not sleep, says "All right", but does not offer a cow.' Thus Kasitile accused the chief of Lubaga who should be Lwembe, to his face, of being reluctant to provide cattle for sacrifice just as the chiefs of Selya were reluctant.

Then Mwalukuta interposed: 'But Kasitile, you admitted that you had injured your father, you had injured your mother.'

Kasitile: 'Yes, indeed it is so, I have injured[1] my father, I have injured my mother.'

That ended the discussion. Kesa fetched bananas and a huge calabash of thick milk for the men of Selya, and Mwalukuta and Mwamakunda started eating at once. Kasitile reproved them: 'What? Do you eat anyhow?' They dropped the bitten bananas hastily. 'Do you not know that you have come here to ask for bananas, to ask for maize? We have come to Mwatonoka (29), to Mwakisisya (56), to Mwanjala (77), to Mwampondele (27) to ask for it. Kyala provided the food.' Then he took up his flask of thick milk and two bananas, and went over to the banana grove at a little distance and prayed aloud:

'You, Mwatonoka (29), you Mwanjala (77) . . . I have come, I Mwalubange (58), I Mwakagile (59) [Kasitile represents their descendants] I have come to beg for maize, to beg for bananas.' Then he came back and joined the party. He sent a large flask of milk over to the local priests; they wanted to refuse and leave all the milk for the visitors, eating only roast bananas, but Kasitile said: 'No, Kyala has provided the food, Kyala has provided it, let us all eat and be satisfied.'

During the meal Kesa and Godrey Wilson discussed steamships and aeroplanes, and the distance and fares to Europe. Mwamalunguka had been to Mbeya and described the wind of an aeroplane coming down and starting, most graphically. Mwanjala (78) wanted very much to go to Europe to see the country. Then Kasitile said: 'Let us go, friends, the rain is coming', so they got up and left, leaving the bull tied to the bananas; the Selya priests had nothing further to do with that; the Lubaga men would kill it at their own convenience.

On the journey back Mwamakunda apologized to Kasitile for having begun to eat before they prayed: 'I am sorry, Mwamukinga (44, addressing Kasitile by his grandfather's name), you have

[1] *Natendile*: literally surpassed, overstepped, with the implication of injuring.

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instructed us, you have taught us the customs, we did not know them, we thought that when the food came that was all.' 782 796

Kasitile said: 'Yes, I do it as our fathers did it.' Then they discussed the dispute between Mwakisisya and Kasitile and agreed that Kasitile had got the better of Mwakisisya with the reference to his own reluctance to provide cattle for sacrifice.

Kasitile was determined to extract a cow for sacrifice from the chief Mwaipopo (116) also, and presently he said:

Friends, listen, let us report at home that we used hard words, we insulted Mwakisisya, we said there is nothing left to eat though we are not really starving. What has come over me? Why am I ill? Let Mwaipopo pay a cow.

The following day Mwamalunguka, one of the priests of Lubaga, explained what was meant by the complaint of insults from Selya:

The people of Mwaipopo (116) do really insult us, and since the Europeans have given them a Court they have begun to say that Mwakisisya (111) is a priest, not a chief, but just an old priest (*inyago*), and we his men are all angry to hear this because Mwakisisya was always the senior. And they do not send us cattle to sacrifice, they say: 'It's European times now, all that is finished.' [177] [578]

But of Kasitile's retort that Mwakisisya himself did not listen to his priests at home, Mwamalunguka said: 'Indeed it is so, that was an excellent reply.'

The party going up to Lubaga and back travelled dry, but on the return journey Kasitile noticed that the road was wet and he remarked, 'The rain follows us again', and it was true, clouds were gathering quickly. An hour and a half after they got home heavy rain began and continued for three or four hours. During the preceding weeks there had been many heavy showers and bright spells, unnoticed and of no particular significance, but the downpour on the day of the sacrifice was immediately connected with it.

Three weeks later the rain had almost stopped and people were talking of drought. Kasitile was quick to link this with the failure to follow up the offering at Lubaga with sacrifices in the groves of the chiefs. On the sixth of April he spoke his mind to Mwambuputa, the senior village headman of Mwaipopo, when both were visiting us. 769 782 796

Where is the rain? [said Kasitile] I am at fault, and my child Mwaipopo (116) also. He ought to provide a cow to kill at Mwaijonga's

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(82) grove. According to custom, we should kill a bull here at the same time as one is killed at Lubaga. A messenger from there finds us eating. That was the custom when the chiefs were really chiefs. Now we neglect the rituals. Mwakisisya (111) cut a ripe banana stem for us, but now the bananas are rotting in the homesteads without ripening [owing to our failure to sacrifice]. If our fathers did not sleep they sacrificed cattle, but if we do not sleep we merely offer beer.

Then Kasitile recalled the quarrel between the men of Mwaipopo (116) and those of Lubaga.

Why did you insult Mwakisisya (111) saying 'What remains of your power?' When we built the Court House in Mwaipopo's country, Mwakisisya's men came to help, and some advised that a beast should be sent to Lubaga to seek blessing on the Court, but others said: 'What use is Lubaga?' . . . Mwakisisya cut a banana stem for us and said 'Seek another cow oh thou Mwakagile' (59, i.e. identifying Kasitile with the grandfather of the chief Mwaipopo whom he represented).

This, however, was an invention of Kasitile's. He continued: 'I, Kasitile, have seen a sacrifice at the grove of Mwaijonga (82) twice, at that of Mwaipopo (115) once, and at that of Mwakabule (117) once, but at Lubaga Kyala has received us frequently.' To which Mwambuputa replied: 'Yes, Kyala has helped us.'

Under pressure from Kasitile and the other priests of his chiefdom Mwaipopo did eventually provide a cow for sacrifice at the grove of his father Mwaijonga (82) but the description of that ritual is deferred to a later chapter.

A fundamental conception in Nyakyusa religion is that the proper working of the natural order depends upon harmony of the social order; on proper co-operation between the 'divine king' and his 'sons' the chiefs, between priests and chiefs, and between them and the whole community. If the Lwembe or a rain-maker is offended, that causes drought or flood in the area of his influence. When there is heavy rain in Selya it is said, 'There is anger at Lubaga' or 'There is anger at Lwembe's place'. Mwanjala II (78) talking of how angry he had been over an insult remarked, 'Had it been the wet season there would have been a torrent of rain.'

And not only does quarrelling between chiefs and priests bring public misfortune; it reacts upon their own health. How Kasitile linked his ill-health with the quarrel between Mwakisisya (111) of Lubaga and the men of Mwaipopo (116) over the Court, and Mwaipopo's failure to provide cattle for sacrifice has just been

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indicated (*vide supra*, p. 35). And, as we shall see later, he also suspected that his quarrels with the Kinga priests and with the commoner priests of Mwaipopo's chiefdom made him ill.

Chiefs, and even the 'divine king' himself, lived in fear of the legitimate anger of their people, more particularly of their village headmen and priests, believing that such anger would bring them sickness, and this belief gave headmen and priests a very strong hold over their lord. How it worked was illustrated by an incident at Lubaga.

Mwanjala II (78) remarked to Mwakilima (111): 'I sent to summon Mwasesi (a commoner priest) for the ritual tomorrow but he refused saying: "I shall not come." He is angry because he was not called to the ritual at your home, nor was he told formally when the Kinga came, or when Mwaipaja [G.W.] came.' Mwakilima (111) asked: 'Will you pay him?' [i.e. admit your mistake and offer him compensation]. Mwanjala replied that he would, and Mwakilima expressed disgust. One of the Kinga priests who was listening broke into the conversation: 'Ignore him if he refuses to come. If it were us we should leave him and celebrate without him, but you Nyakyusa are all witches, and you fear to ignore a man who refuses to come to a ritual saying that he will bewitch you. You are cowards, you are!'

At this Godfrey Wilson asked if there were no witchcraft in BuKinga. The Kinga priest replied: 'There is some, but if the chief gives orders to celebrate a ritual and someone refuses to come we ignore him, and celebrate without him. You Nyakyusa *pay* a man for doing wrong. A man refuses to come when he should and then you *pay* him! If you are afraid of witchcraft why not finish the ritual and send his portion of meat to him afterwards?'

Another priest objected: 'Then he would say it was too small a piece.'

The commoner priests then could control even the Lwembe (for Mwanjala II acted in the place of the Lwembe though he was not installed), but at the same time the mystical power of the Lwembe was feared both by ordinary chiefs and commoners. Mwaijonga (82), who ruled before the European occupation, insulted and fought Mwakisisya the Lwembe (56), and killed some of his men, because 'Lwembe had spoiled the year', but he sent back the cattle that were seized.

In the old days it did not matter killing the Lwembe's men (in war), but no one dared to take his cattle, they feared lest he would spoil the year and send too much rain, and a plague of ulcers, and cause the cattle to

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anger which brought the drought then it will rain (for I am no longer angry). But if the rain does not come then it cannot have been my anger, it must have been someone [of the dead Kyungus] whom you forgot to ask about.' 'And if, after that, the rain came soon, then it was not likely that anyone would insult the Kyungu again.' If, however, it did not rain, then the nobles of Ngonde would approach the Kyungu once more and ask why it had not rained. He would say that he did not know, that he himself was certainly not angry, and they must have forgotten someone, they had better go and divine again. And so they would, and then the diviner would tell them that it was so-and-so (one of the dead Kyungus) and they would go and sacrifice in his grove.

Thus to insult Kyungu was not only treasonable, it was blasphemous, and the whole plain was believed to be cursed with drought or disease in reply. An 'insult' might mean any neglect of the obligations of the chiefs and nobles and commoners of the plain to their lord.

The people of Ngonde hoed large fields as tribute to the Kyungu and if they failed to do so 'he grew angry and poured all the water out of the pot in which he kept his rain stones' (*vide infra*, p. 114) and 'the sky dried up'. Then the chiefs called their men to hoe. . . . 'They hoed and hoed and hoed and their wives planted, then the rain came in a torrent. . . . Kyungu created much rain.'

Or if an elephant hunter neglected to send the Kyungu one of the tusks of any elephant he killed he would not kill another. 'The country beneath was angry . . . the shades of the dead Kyungus . . . they were angry saying: "Why do you stint our child?" '

The rainfall in the Ngonde plain is less than half what it is in the Nyakyusa valley and anxiety about rainfall was constantly shown in the communal rituals; elephant hunting was also a matter of concern in a way in which it was not among the Nyakyusa and this too is reflected in rituals; but there was also the preoccupation with health and fertility, as in the prayers at Lubaga. In the groves circling Mbande the nobles prayed: 'May the sterile bear children, may the cattle and fowls increase, may the children sleep and not cry at night, may the witches not injure anyone.' And as we shall see, it was health and fertility that men had in mind when they cleared out the ashes each year after the break of the rains.

Towards Christmas time, when the first maize and the first

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769 pumpkin leaves were ready to eat, an elaborate first-fruit ceremony was formerly carried out. The new season's food was offered first by the nobles of Ngonde in the grove of the previous Kyungu, the one who had last died.

[778] The great chiefs would do so next, each at his own sacred grove (the grave of his own predecessor in the title). And after them everyone, both chiefs and people, each at his father's grave. All offered first fruits to their own shades. And finally they would themselves eat, each with his chief wife. But they would not eat beforehand for fear of angering the shades.

643 In time of tribal war also the Kyungu and nobles of Ngonde 796 led the people in prayer. All chiefs and nobles were summoned [721] from the plain and the great ones entered the Kyungu's house to receive their instructions:

[782] When he had finished speaking he would tell them to go and pray. So they would leave his house and gather all together, all the chiefs, and the other men, and pray. The premier noble of Ngonde would begin asking each of the sacred groves of the Kyungus in turn to bless them in the fight. And then the great chiefs would pray after him.

This organization of religious ritual in the Ngonde plain was both a factor of and itself determined by the general political structure. Many details of the secular power of Mbande and of the lesser authorities were dependent upon their religious functions, but the reverse is equally true. Among the Nyakyusa, where the hierarchy of chiefs had scarcely any secular significance, [782] the organization of religious ritual was far less elaborate. Cattle were sent to Lubaga by the chiefs to be sacrified for rain and health; but the 'clearing out of the ashes' was done by each chiefdom separately; there was no general first-fruits ritual at all; while, as war was never waged on a tribal basis, prayers and sacrifices for military success were always undertaken by each warring chiefdom alone.

643 The majesty (*ubusiya*) of the Kyungu was cultivated in a variety 789 of ways. He smeared himself with ointment made from lion fat, and his bed was built up with elephant tusks and lion pelts. He [352] was enthroned on the sacred iron stool called Kisumbi, he had a [293] spear, Kamisa, and Mulima, a porous piece of iron 'like a mouth organ' used to make rain, all handed down from the first Kyungu. [778] His zebra tails, set with medicines in horn handles, were waved in

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Since the 'coming out' of his sons spelt not only retirement, but a speedy death to a chief, he was not unnaturally reluctant to hasten it and, we were told, chiefs would try to defer it, but were pressed by their village headmen to celebrate, and had eventually to accept their advice. Indeed we heard of one chief whose illness was attributed to the 'breath' of his men, angry because he refused to hold the 'coming out' which was due.

Nowadays the situation is radically altered by the fact that chiefs continue to live long after the 'coming out' of their sons, and the administration treats the old chief as the sole authority, or the old men find good reasons for not holding the celebration at all.

Before the ritual there is much speculation and excitement throughout the chiefdom, and private discussions between the old chief and his village headmen about suitable candidates for office. They look for men of wisdom (*amahala*),[1] skilled in settling disputes, modest (for boastfulness is judged intolerable in a Nyakyusa age-village as it is in an English public school), and given to hospitality. A leader must feed his men and to do so he requires to be relatively wealthy, therefore the poor have little chance of office.

When the old men are agreed among themselves they summon all the young men to the capital. They come dancing and swaggering with all their cattle, and there the old headmen seize, one by one, those they have chosen as village headmen for the next generation, beginning with the senior headman for each heir, then the second senior for each, and so on. Usually eight are chosen, four for each young chief. We get a glimpse of what it means to one individual in the following statement by the second headman of the chief, Koroso (173):

> I made fire at the 1910 'coming out'. I can't tell much because we who were caught were in fear and trembling. I knew beforehand, because my brother was told to come from Ipyana [mission], but he was a Christian and the missionaries refused to allow him to become a village headman—they feared the medicines. He ran away and came here—he wanted to be a headman and the old men wanted him, but then he changed his mind and went off to be a soldier, and so they took me.

Probably word of who have been chosen as village headmen

[1] For a discussion of the content of *amahala*, cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 89-90.

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643 622 • 796 [784] often leaks out, but in theory the young men must not know, and those seized always put up a show of resistance before being bundled into the hut of the senior heir's mother. Once there, no man dare flee lest, like a Lwembe fleeing from the stool, he should die. The two heirs are seized also and carried into the hut with their headmen. A litter is spread for them, and they remain there in complete seclusion, required to 'talk softly' and avoid quarrelling, guarded by the 'doctor of the coming out' and forbidden to wash except that each of the chiefs and his senior village headman washes with medicines in the doorway of the hut. Each chief also lies down with a commoner and is covered with a black cloth [789] which, according to Mwandini (the old blind chief 107) is a symbol of clouds and therefore of plenty. 'It means, may it be heavy—cloudy—above, may food be plentiful; may both heirs bring fruitfulness.' The commoner who lies with the chief is 'one body with him', 'his wife', and continues through life to share with him certain medicines. Some said that the senior village headman performs this function for his chief: others that it is another man altogether. The whole matter is very secret and our information is limited. The period of seclusion varies. Mwanyilu (177), who 'came out' in 1953, remained in the hut a month, and he complained most bitterly of the inconvenience of not washing for so long. During this time the young men are admonished by [807] their fathers' senior village headmen, and told of their faults and their future duties. According to Mwambuputa (Mwankuga's [150] senior headman who was responsible for bringing out Mwanyilu), he said: 'Listen to the people: they are the real chiefs! Be hospitable! Greet people politely! Don't beat your men!' And the other senior headman, Kakuju, said: 'Do not beat your men, respect them! Feed your people on milk, meat, chickens, beer! Fear your people!'

Then the great moment, from which the ritual takes its name, arrives. Very early in the morning a crowd gathers and a junior kinsman of the chief knocks on the door and shouts: 'Come out! War has come!' Each heir, followed by his senior headman, [778] rushes out and grasps the 'spear of chieftainship' held ready at the doorway for him, while the headman grasps a medicated zebra tail. The spear has a little horn of medicines bound to it 'to show that the chief has come out', and brandishing it is 'comparable to carrying the chief aloft. We show his greatness to the people and acclaim him.' 'The spear of chieftainship is strength, man-

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hood.' Some say that it is not the chief himself who grasps the spear but his senior village headman who pauses in the doorway calling the war cry and rejoicing. However that may be, the spear represents the authority of a ruling chief. At the 'coming out' of Mwanyilu (177) and his junior brother Mwabungulu (178), both were secluded and rushed out of the hut, but for Mwabungulu there was no spear since the chiefdom of their father was not divided into independent units.

The heirs separate, each going to where his village is to stand, whether it be pasture land or the site of a former village. The young men build temporary shelters for themselves and proceed to the most important rite of all, the making of fire by friction, using a lion bone as the trough of the drill and a reed as the shaft. Each of the two young chiefs starts the process, then his senior village headmen take over, one twirling the shaft and the other holding the trough. It is difficult to make fire with the bone and reed and great importance is attached to success; the senior headman may even be replaced if he fails, for it is taken as a sign that his headmanship will be a failure. If he succeeds, he is known in future as *ulifumu gwa lupegwe*—the headman of the fire-making. All the old fires throughout the chiefdom are put out and each appointed headman, in order of precedence, takes fire from his immediate senior and calls to his men: 'You of such and such a village come to me' and gives fire to them. The men, though crowded together in one or two shelters, split into small groups, each with its own fire, to cook. This is interpreted as a symbol of the ending of the old chieftainship and the establishment of the new. 'That fire means a new chief has come, he brings new fire, we throw away the old fire in the houses. . . .' 'The old chieftainship is coming to an end, the new has come. The fires are put out in all the homesteads, those of the young men and those of the old men, they make new fire which is taken to every home. . . .' 'But why fire?' we asked. 'Because of old . . . we chiefs came with fire, the commoners had not yet got it, they ate raw food only. When we came we slept in men's houses and we lighted fires and cooked food. Men were astonished and said: "Ha! What's this?" They were burned so they said: "These are chiefs because they brought this fire." It is this they remember still.' *Fire is lordship (ubutwe)*, therefore a *junior chief* who goes through the ritual with his brothers does not make fire with his headmen; only those who are to rule do so. In other contexts the lighting of fire by friction is a

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symbol of potency,[1] and we suggest that this also is an element in the ritual of the 'coming out', for the fertility of the chiefdom is thought to be bound up with the virility of the chief.

There are a number of stories about the way in which Mwakyusa (38) surpassed his brothers and one of them tells how each brother made fire and set alight the pasture land (for traditionally parts of the pasture land were fired each season to provide fresh grass for grazing in the early spring), and the fires started by the elder brothers soon died out, but that started by Mwakyusa 'burned for a whole month'. This is interpreted as an omen of his greatness as a chief: fire, potency, lordship are inextricably linked.

At the 'coming out' all things are made new. No matter how crowded the country the young men must move to new sites and the shelters in which they live must be new, though, as will be shown, they do not necessarily move to *unoccupied* country. On their new site the young men live as bachelors, milking their cows and cooking for themselves on their new fires the meat of the cattle they seize, the bananas and grain brought by their wives and mothers. Meat is abundant, for the young chief now rules and has the right to take what cattle he chooses, even from the villages of the old men in his country. 'It was as if there were war, the young men seized cattle, food, and women', and though they did not fight their fathers directly, as the Meru did, they clearly asserted their power. And, as so common further south, the accession of a chief was the occasion for raiding the neighbours: the young men, we were told, went forthwith to test the efficacy of the magic spears and the medicines with which their chief and headmen had been treated. Or the chiefs might lead a battue to clear the country of wild pig, as Mwakatumbula (*Mwandoto* rite) did directly after his 'coming out'. Well fed and exuberant, the young men dance and display their cattle, and entertain visitors lavishly, for every chief seeks to attract men to his country by his hospitality.

Then they set up the sign and memorial of the chieftainship: they plant cuttings of two species[2] of *fase*, *indale* which is much used as a shade tree, and *umpundapunda* from which bark-cloth is made. Close to these the first house of the chief and that of his senior village headmen are built, and the trees also mark the

[1] Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 124, 125.

[2] Wilson writing *Good Company* I mistakenly thought that two cuttings of the same species were planted. Cf. *Good Company*, p. 25.

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future boundary between the two halves of the chiefdom, where it will split the next generation. They serve as beacons[1] and are cited as evidence both of the 'coming out' and of the division of land in any later dispute. At the same time the trees are symbols of chieftainship and with their growth the success of the reign is mystically linked. According to one account, 'four headmen fetch the saplings and the young chief stands between them (*title plate 6*) and tells the trees to grow well, and the others say: "We are planting you likewise, we are at the ritual of establishing a new chieftainship, you are a symbol for our chief, spread branches that our young headmen and other people may rest in your shade."'[2] A doctor assists at the planting, burying at the roots a live white sheep and medicines, which, it is said, later turn into the lions or leopards which protect the trees from the impious (*vide infra*, p. 58); and he weeps beneath the trees, a symbol of what the senior headman must do in future, for it is his duty to 'watch over the trees'. In Nyakyusa thought, village headmen are an integral part of chieftainship—it cannot exist without them—and the trees symbolize *both* the chief and his lady and the two senior headmen. The same informant (well known as a doctor for the 'coming out') told us: 'It means we are planting the chief and his lady; *unyandipanda* is the hard to bend *indole*, which is the more important. *Unyandipanda* is the woman, it may dry up, but *ulupanda* (*indole*) never does; it is the *chief*, it is familiars (*ulupepe*). Just *unyandipanda* is not', and a moment or two later, 'the *ulupanda* is the senior village headman, *unyandipanda* is the junior headman'. The strength of the chief is associated with the growth of the trees. If these trees go dry the reign will not be successful, the chief will be defeated in war. If they flourish and grow the reign will be successful, the chief is a ruler. The *indole* planted for Mwaijonga (61) is shown proudly by his great-grandson, and Mwambete (169) who had a long reign and an enormous family boasted of the size of his *unyandipanda*—'a great spreading tree'. Ideally the young chief should, in due course, sit in the shade of his *indole* with his headmen, to settle disputes.

After the trees are planted the young men build their senior headman's house and the doctor sets up his hearth bricks, burying medicine beneath them also. The marriage of the chief follows.[3]

[1] cf. D. Kerr-Cross, 'Cross-Lakes north of Lake Nyasa', *The Geographical Journal*, c, IV (1892), p. 113.

[2] According to most accounts, but *vide infra*, p. 58.

[3]

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622 He, like many of his men, may have been married long before the
643 'coming out', but his ritual wedding to the mothers of his heirs
796 follows it, and from the time of his seclusion, until his marriage,
585 he, and all his men, should live as bachelors. The brides are chosen by his village headmen and in theory they are carried off by force, whether betrothed or not, but nowadays, since the [177] Administration discountenances forced marriages, the headmen arrange matters with the girls' families beforehand, very privately, but still they come with a show of force to carry off the brides. Girls are chosen who are approaching puberty and they are taken to the house of a commoner contemporary of their future husband. There they live until both have grown up and the puberty ritual can be celebrated. It follows the usual course except that the [584] neighbours of the man in whose house the brides are secluded play the part of the girls' families, cooking for the groom's party at the prescribed feasts. The chief washes with both girls, thereby acknowledging them as his senior wives; the marriage bed is prepared with medicines and there is great rejoicing. The following morning someone knocks at the door of the nuptial chamber crying: 'War has come', and the chief and his brides rush out to the pasture land, just as the parents of twins do at the end of their ritual.[1] Then[2] a long narrow stone (*ulufiga*) is set with medicines [789] in the earth, beside the chief's trees as a symbol of his marriage (*ikimanyilo kya bwegi*) to the mothers of his heirs. 'The stone *is* the chief' (*ilifiga ili jo malafyale*). Hearth-bricks (*amafiga*) are then set up for each bride with medicines buried beneath them, and they are given fire from that ritually kindled by their husband and his headman. Finally they are given medicines to drink in order to develop in them 'the dignity of chief's wives' (*ubuuiya bwa bwehe*).

643 No marriage is complete, in Nyakyusa eyes, until cattle have
583 been handed over, and though the chief's brides have been carried off by force, cattle—more than double the normal number—are given to their fathers. The village headmen of the retiring generation should provide these cattle and they or their heirs are recompensed when the eldest daughters born of the two wives are

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 158, 169.

[2] Mwanyilu's marriage apparently preceded the planting of his trees and the phallic stone was erected at the same time as the trees were planted, but the marriages of the sons of Mwangoka *followed* the planting of their trees. The order of events seems to vary, and differences are explained as due to the order of the doctor in charge of the ritual. 'Different doctors have different customs.'

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married. Thus, yet another bond is forged between chief and headman, for he who provides marriage cattle is 'father' to him who marries, and the chief's wives acknowledge this by avoiding the village headmen of the senior generation as they do their father-in-law. Once the chief's ritual marriage is complete the sex taboo is lifted and such of his men as are already married are joined by their wives. In theory, though not nowadays in practice, the taboo is observed until the marriage of the chief.

All through the ritual of the 'coming out' the idea of a new beginning is expressed—a new site for the villages, new houses, new fire, new power for the young men. The events of this ritual, the seclusion, the lying on a litter, the prohibition on washing, washing with medicines in the doorway of the hut, the admonition, are directly parallel to the events of the rituals of death and puberty which, we have argued in a previous book,[1] are dramatizations of death and rebirth. There seems little doubt that the 'coming out' is yet another celebration of this theme. The young men enter an enclosed house—that of the senior's mother—and 'come out' (*ukusoka*) renewed as a child 'comes out' (*ukusoka*) of the mother's womb. No Nyakyusa informant volunteered such an interpretation, but, when it was suggested, it was eagerly accepted as expressing the real meaning of 'coming out'.

(*b*) THE CHIEF'S MEDICINES

Reference has already been made to medicines used by chiefs and by village headmen at the 'coming out' and we must now examine them more closely. The great medicines of chieftainship are *ifingila* and their function is to create *amaaga*, i.e. spiritual power, and *ubusinya*, i.e. dignity, majesty, in order to make the chief fearful 'so that men obey him'. The medicines are comparable to robes of office for they are designed to give their user assurance and fill the commonality with awe. The Nyakyusa also think that chiefs and headmen should be 'heavy' with 'pythons in their bellies' which give them the power to see and fight witches. Without such a 'python' a chief or village headman cannot fulfil his duty of 'watching over the country by day and by night' and if a man is not born with one he may develop it through the proper use of medicines. This notion has been examined elsewhere.[2] The *ifingila* medicines are also thought to give courage and ferocity (*ubugasi*) in war, with luck in seizing enemy

[1] *op. cit.*, p. 205. [2] Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 97-102.

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fashion. Each village is occupied by an age-set and men are emphatic that age and friendship, not kinship, are the basis of a village, but the villages of fathers, sons, and grandsons commonly, though not invariably, adjoin one another, as Bujegr, Igembe, and Lupando, or Lupondo, Njisi, and Iringa in Mwaipopo's chiefdom (*side* plan, p. 101). Each section of a chiefdom comprises half the ruling generation, and interspersed with their villages are those of their fathers and sons. Men are identified by the name of their village, section, and chief; the village name defines their age-set, the name of section and chief their generation. The section name is always that of the senior village which leads it. Generation succeeds generation in office when their heirs 'come out', but the relative position of villages (age-sets) within a generation remains constant. Since chiefdoms traditionally split each generation at the 'coming out' the men of the retired generation who remained belonged to one section only; those of the other section of their generation were members of another chiefdom. The territorial arrangements reflected in the plan of Mwaipopo's chiefdom on p. 101 are modified by the fact that the chiefdom has not split for four generations. In generation I Kibonde was the portion of the junior heir, Mwafungo (83), but he died young and his land and widow were inherited by the senior brother, Mwaijonga (82). The son of this leviratical union, Mwakipesile (118), went through the 'coming out' in generation II along with Mwaijonga's heirs, Ijonga (114, representing her full brother 115), and Mwakabule (117). Mwakipesile inherited Kibonde and Mwakabule inherited Kituli, but both were later defeated in war by Mwaipopo II and their land incorporated in his chiefdom. Mwakipesile's heir, Likoyela, and Mwakabule remained as subordinate chiefs. Though the girl Ijonga celebrated the 'coming out' in place of her unborn brother she could not rule, and Mwaiteteja, son of Mwaijonga II (younger full brother of 82) acted for her. He was finally defeated by Mwaipopo II and fled to the periphery of the country. Kabula was his village, and he was subordinate to Mwaipopo, not independent.

In generation III the chiefdom did not split because by that time the British administration was in control, and the territorial division remained much the same, Igembe and Njisi becoming the senior villages in place of Bujegr and Lupondo, with Mwankuga (150) and Mwaseba (152) as the young chiefs. Kibonde,

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system is still the accepted form in Mwaipopo's chiefdom; the advantages of separating kinsmen in different villages are explicitly stated, and the contrast between the Nyakyusa and their neighbours in this respect emphasized. 'Certainly we do not live with kinsmen here but the Kinga do.' 'It is not good for a son to live close to his father, they will quarrel.' 'When we move to another village we consider friendship not kinship in selecting it.'

(*b*) THE BALANCE BETWEEN GENERATIONS AND SECTIONS

The ritual cycle of the 'coming out' and the sacrifices in the groves helped to maintain a balance of power between generations, as well as between chiefs and commoners. At the 'coming out' of Mwanyilu (177) in 1953 it was Mwabuputa, the senior village headman of his father, who took the leading part. He was described as 'the greatest man in the country' who 'brings out the chief' and his manner indicated that he was well aware of his power. During the reign of Mwaipopo (116) the power of his father's village headmen, Njobakosa and Ngulyo, was apparent at every ritual. Spiritual power was shared between chiefs and commoners, but exercised ideally by a virile chief of the ruling generation and the experienced headmen of the retired generation.

Those chosen as senior village headmen at the 'coming out' are commonly older than the young chief, but village headmen are thought of as surviving their chief—it is they who were responsible for smothering him, and performing the sacrifices in his grove. The headmanship is an *office* and so long as the office is necessary an incumbent is found for it, in the person of the heir of the original holder who is so closely identified with the deceased that most precise inquiry is often necessary to establish whether a given individual is the original holder, the succeeding heir, or a later heir, successor to the successor. The Ngulyo who officiated at the rituals in 1935 was the heir of the original Ngulyo (some said the *grandson*, not the son) and he was criticized by Kasitile as being 'a young man who knew nothing'. The principle, so familiar in Central Africa, of a perpetual office[1] emerges, among the

[1] I. Cunnison, *Kinship and Local Organization on the Luapula*, Communications of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute No. 3 (1950), pp. 14-15; J. C. Mitchell, *The Yao Village*, Manchester (1956), p. 109; A. I. Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia*, O.U.P. (1939), p. 94; 'Some Types of Family Structure among the Central Bantu', in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, p. 224; J. Roscoe, *The Baganda*, London (1911), p. 3.

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Nyakyusa, when sacrifices are continued in the grove of a dead chief such as Mwakisambwe (30), for an indefinite number of generations, and the heirs of his senior village headmen serve as his priests, taking the name of the first holder of the office. Most of the priests of Lubaga held perpetual titles of this sort. The conception of the *corporation sole* is familiar enough in the western tradition, but European observers in Africa are sometimes confused by the use of a personal name and the almost complete identification of each holder with his predecessors, as well as by the practice of treating certain kinship relationships as if they were offices.

Generation was determined among the Nyakyusa by association with a chief. There was no name for those who 'came out' together other than that of their chief, who was the focus of the ritual. On the other hand, however, a 'coming out' concerned a whole generation, and it could not be held out of season. If the heir died he was replaced by a brother, as were Mwaipopo I (115) and Mwankuga I (150). If a chief had no male heir of the right age in his senior house his daughter might represent an heir. For example, at the coming out of the sons of Mwaijonga, it was a *girl* Ijonga (114) who performed the leading part in the ritual which fell due before the birth of Mwaipopo I (115). When Mwaipopo I was born and grew up he assumed office, but he died young and was replaced by his younger brother without a further celebration. Because the 'coming out' was thus linked to the maturity of a whole generation we have felt some confidence in assigning approximate dates to the arrival of the heroes. The period between each 'coming out' we estimate at thirty to thirty-five years, though the higher figure is probably more nearly correct. There must in fact have been some flexibility in the timing of the 'coming out' to account for the differences in the number of generations of ruling chiefs in different segments of the lineage. Some of the differences may be due to errors (e.g. it is possible that 70 is an elder brother not the father of 98, and that a generation has been omitted between Mwakapeje (54) and Mwakage (75)), but even where there is little possibility of error the number of generations does not always tally.

In theory a man always belongs to the generation succeeding that of his father, irrespective of his age, provided he has not inherited from a man of the previous generation and taken his status, but in practice, since men often have sons of very different

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NOTE

621 631 561 [103] [796] It should be realized that (i) the names of the two senior villages of a generation are well known and clear cut, but those of subordinate villages are more fluid. Furthermore a village often has subdivisions, distinguished by its members by name, but known to outsiders only by the general village name. (ii) A village may acquire a new name at the 'coming out'; the senior village of Mwanyilu's generation used to be called 'Mpuguso' but 'came out' as 'Lupando'. (iii) Some villages die out altogether, e.g. Kyemo II. (iv) Some villages straddle generations. Katela in 1955 is in the same sort of position as Katumba in 1935. It includes eight sons of Mpunga who belong to generation III, but also fourteen sons of men of Masoko who 'came out' with Mwanyilu. In the case of Katumba the members who were sons of men of generation III moved to younger villages and 'came out' with Mwanyilu, among them being his senior headman Kilasile, a man of over forty. But Kilasile's contemporaries who were sons of men of generation II could not 'come out' with Mwanyilu, at least not as a group—and the members of Katumba attended the 'coming out' as 'fathers'. Boys join a village of contemporaries but may move later to a village of younger men who are of their own structural generation.

At the 'coming out' of Mwanyilu and Mwabungulu five village headmen were 'caught' and secluded with their chiefs. They represented five clear-cut villages. Kilasile and Sikambombo, Mwanyilu's two senior headmen who made fire are leaders of Lupando and Iringa respectively; Pauliki and Batungulu their juniors are leaders of [622] Bujisi (or Ipoma) and Mfumbi (or Isuba), and Mwanjotile the single headman of the junior heir, Mwabungulu, has his own village of Nkuyu established on newly settled land in the forest. The young men of Kibonde were included under Kilasile's authority, and those of Kituli and Kabula under Sikambombo's. The names Lupando and Iringa are well known as those of sections of Mwanyilu's chiefdom, but the names Bujisi and Mfumbi are not: the young men of these villages still use the names of their fathers' villages, Ipoma and Isuba, though there is a clear territorial separation between fathers and sons. Taxes [651] are collected under the names of Igembe, Ipoma, Kibonde, Njisi, Isuba, Kituli, and the three forest villages, Kilosi, Kiloba, and Nkuyu.

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CHAPTER VII

CLEANSING THE COUNTRY

769 SACRIFICES to the heroes and the shades of the chiefs are holy and private—only a handful of priests and chiefs may enter the groves and the details of the rituals are not discussed with other people. But there are other celebrations in which everyone 796 participates; these are the rituals for cleansing the community— 783 'throwing out the rubbish' (*ukujola ikikungu*)—more specifically the *ashes* from all the hearths.

In Ngonde the cleansing is organized for the whole kingdom, from Mbande, but among the Nyakyusa each chiefdom acts independently. Traditionally, we were told, the *ukujola ikikungu* was an annual celebration, observed at the 'new year', after the break of the rains, but it could also take place if there were much sickness in the country, or plague, or prophecies of evil to come. It was celebrated (in an attenuated form and by a section of the community only) in Ngonde in July 1937, to cleanse the country of a plague of rats, and in September of the same year a somewhat similar ritual was performed in Porokoto's chiefdom because a [787] fearful omen had been seen—a ground hornbill had eaten a [178] chicken. The annual celebrations had been dropped both in Ngonde and BuNyakyusa before 1935.

As has been shown in the *Rituals of Kinship* the Nyakyusa believe [769] that too close an association with the shades is dangerous; all the [755] family rituals are designed to drive them away, to drive them out of the bodies of the mourners, or menstruating girls, or parents of twins; and the purpose of 'throwing out the ashes' in all the homesteads is essentially the same. The shades 'come to warm 783 themselves' at the hearths of their descendants, they 'bring sickness [775] to the hearths' and so the old ashes are cleared out and new fire is lighted. The phrase *ukujola ikikungu* is used in Ngonde for clearing out the litter (*ulufumbo*) after a burial, or an initiation ritual, and for shaving after a ritual, as well as for clearing the ashes from all the hearths in the country.

[754] It is also thought that domestic fires are contaminated by [775] witches who may have cooked the human flesh they steal over their victims' own fires. In Ngonde it was the connexion between

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the shades and the hearths which was stressed; in Porokoto's country people talked mostly of the witches; but it seemed clear that both conceptions were present when men murmured: 'The hearth bricks are bad' (*amafiga mabibi*) and they sought to cleanse them by clearing out the old fire and lighting new. 'To clear out the ashes means they take away all that dirt, the dirt which the witches have brought and the shades; it is the cause of illness.' When witches are thought to be active there is also a public complaint, and a public warning is given 'to whom it may concern' to desist.[1] This occurred in the ritual after the ground hornbill had eaten the chicken. Above all, men must admit their anger to one another: 'they fight that the homesteads may be peaceful'. The theme so familiar in Nyakyusa rituals—that quarrels must be confessed if they are to be composed—recurs yet again. Though we distinguish the rituals for 'cleansing the country' from sacrifices, on the ground that the whole community participates in the 'cleansing' while the sacrifice is esoteric, the two are closely linked, and a sacrifice commonly precedes or follows the cleansing. We turn now to the detailed accounts of celebrations for 'cleansing' in Ngonde and among the Kukwe.

(*a*) THE RATS

In Ngonde they used to clear out the ashes at the new year, at the first hoeing (in December) after 'the break of the rains'. They feared that death and disease would spread through the land if they continued living with the old fires, that the shades in the earth, both the shades of chiefs and of commoners, would be angry. Let them drive the shades away and hoe in peace. They always remembered to do so each new year; for the old men used to keep these things in mind continually, they never forgot. The Kyungu would summon the whole country to clear out the ashes; and then they would hoe in peace. And at other times, too, if prophecy came on someone, they would clear out the ashes again. 'It is to drive away the shade with the sickness that he brings. We throw out the ashes and firebrands because he has come to warm himself over the fire in our houses, we throw out the pots and winnowing baskets because he has come to see us eating; let him go there (to the grove) and eat what he asked for—we say the shades ask for food—let him eat hens, perhaps a sheep. We say the shades bring sickness to the fire, hence we throw out the ashes and make new fire with a drill.'

The nobles of Ngonde approached the Kyungu and he gave

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 109-13.

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the order to clear out the ashes; messages were sent to the great chiefs and the senior territorial nobles of the plain, and they told their juniors. A sacrifice was made in one of the sacred groves of the Kyungus and all fires in the whole Ngonde plain were put out. And then

> all the chiefs from every country near Mbande and the nobles and all the village headmen and all the ordinary men and women, too, went to Kyimbwe where we threw away the sickness of all the country.

At Kyimbwe, which is the crossroads in the bush, they threw away the ashes of their old fires, and some of the pots and baskets in which food is served; while those few people who could not get to Kyimbwe threw them away from their own houses on the same day as the others. At Kyimbwe new fire was made with a fire-drill by the nobles of Ngonde who

> ran with it without looking back and the people danced alongside them and speared one another! . . . They said, 'Let us dance, let us fight that the homesteads may be peaceful'. . . . 'Let us throw out the ashes that death may leave the homesteads and they be at peace.' It is to bring out war from within (*ukusaya*).

The symbolism is the same as in the rituals of kinship when kinsmen gather to admit their quarrels and press one another to speak out, so that they may cleanse themselves of anger.

The new fire was distributed to the whole plain in order. Great chiefs and senior nobles took it first and passed it to their juniors, chiefs passed to village headmen, and in each group the common people got it from their own ruling noble or their own village headman.

In July 1937, while we were visiting Ngonde, there was a plague of rats[1] which threatened the food supply, and Bungulu, the wife of a chief and well known as a prophetess, went into a trance and revealed that the rats were caused by the anger of the previous Kyungu and could be got rid of only by a ritual 'throwing out the rubbish' and sacrifice. Her husband reported the matter to Mulwa, the premier noble of Ngonde, to whom the present Kyungu, Peter—at one time a Church member—had long since handed over all responsibility for communal rituals. Mulwa called four of the leading chiefs who were pagan and a number of

[1] Nothing new in Ngonde. Lord (then Captain) Lugard suffered from them in 1890: F. D. Lugard, *The Rise of our East African Empire* (1893), vol. i, p. 127. In 1937 the country swarmed with rats: in our own camp we killed 70 to 100 each night.

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commoners, and they went together to the grove of Mwangalaba, the last Kyungu (elder brother of Peter), with a white hen and sacrificed it there, and prayed saying:

Mwangalaba go thou to Mwakasungula your father and let him go to Mwangonde, and he to Mwagemo and he to Kiposa and he to Mpeta and he to Mwendemange and he to Kyabala and he to Syola and he to the Kyungu who lived at Mano and he to Ngulube (9) and Lyambilo (12). May he stand by us, may we sleep, may the rats disappear and illness also, may we sleep. Then when we had finished the invocation [I quote Mulwa] we extinguished the fires in all our houses; in the houses of the chiefs, and of Kyungu's great wife Namwilan'ombe, and of us commoners, we threw water on the ashes, but each took some ash, and a firebrand to the crossroads at Kyimbwe where we collected them all and left them to rot; there we threw away the rats saying: 'Let them fly away to Ngulube (9), let them fly away with the wind, let us sleep.' Then we ran to the pasture land to make new fire with a drill. We all took fire there in the bush, each a firebrand and lighted new fires in our own houses and in the house of the Kyungu, that is of his great wife. We arranged it with our wife Namwilan'ombe, because Kyungu had said 'Work with your husbands there'.

'Throwing away the rats' consisted in enclosing a live rat in two winnowing baskets, opening them at Kyimbwe, and flourishing them first in one direction and then in another, releasing the rat in the process. This had been specifically ordered by Bungulu, the prophetess.

(*b*) THE GROUND HORNBILL

In the country of Porokoto (49 K) there was much illness and many deaths (some, at least, from typhoid) during the dry season of 1937, and when a ground hornbill—always a bird of ill-omen among the Nyakyusa—mysteriously attacked a chicken in Syokela village, everyone was horrified. Mwamunda, a village headman, explained what had happened:

The headman of Syokela came with two men to Bwilile (senior village headman of his side) and said: 'Tell the chief that a ground hornbill has eaten a fowl at our place. We ask what this means. And also we do not sleep, we are ill.' Then Bwilile told me and we went together to the chief who said: 'I have heard, let us discuss it.' So we gathered at Nayeni's and the headman of Syokela stood up and said: 'My fathers, and friends, and children, and you chiefs, we have come to ask: have you ever before heard of a ground hornbill eating a fowl? (With an air

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of intense questioning.) We have not, but perhaps you have?' Then we all denied having heard of such a thing; we had no idea what the portent meant and said: 'Let us consult an oracle.' The chief agreed. . . . Then men went to the doctor and the oracle said: 'It is because you have not celebrated at Mwakan'ata's (90 K) place since his death;[1] you must kill a cow and clear the grass at his place. This ground hornbill is your father Mwakan'ata; seek a cow and celebrate and pray, then you will see what will happen.' They told the chief this and he said: 'Must I find a cow then?' But it is we village headmen who have done wrong because some of us said: 'What's a cow for? Let us just pray; why should we throw away a cow?' Others of us said: 'Yes, let a cow be found', but the chief listened to those who opposed killing a cow. So we went and prayed without eating anything.

The ritual was put off three times; the first time the people were summoned men of one village had not come; the second time men of another; the third time a headman was missing and also the women had not been called. Finally, on the morning of 28th September, men and women and children gathered on the pasture land just beyond Ilolo village (where we lived). The men and boys sat, with their headmen, by villages, each forming a segment of the great circle round the chief, while the women all crowded together some distance behind him. . . . 'We all go, except the Christians.'

The chief Porokoto, rather nervous in his manner, stood up and addressed the company after one of the headmen had said pointedly: 'We are all women, a man stands in the middle, it is he who speaks.' For women never pray, blowing out water, and commoners in this situation do not pray, only the chief.

POROKOTO: The reason I have called you together is this: there is no peace in the country; there is much cold, many people are shivering with fever, let us drink water and drive away Kyala. This concerns all he homesteads; the cold [i.e. fever] is finishing us. What do you say Mwamunda? [to the headman].

MWAMUNDA: Thank you! We rejoice that you chiefs have remembered. May we sleep well, may there not be illness, may the cold pass, may the children grow well, and all the crops. Indeed we are all in great trouble. Kyala help us, may we be pure (*tujebula*)!

Then the chief called on one village headman after another to speak; and his elder brother, Mwasalemba, also spoke.

[1] Porokoto was already sceptical of pagan ritual and has since become a Christian.

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MWAFULA: Indeed, may the illness not be great, may the children not cry by night, may the cattle increase, and the fields be fertile, and the fowls also increase. May children sleep. Our fathers always confessed in the house. Now we are shocked at what is happening. 783 796

MWANTIMWA: We say thank you, chiefs, you do not forget us. Let the sickness pass and go away, may the cattle sleep, and you women, may the children grow. May the fields be fertile; may there not be envy of one another. We are sorry because there is much illness. Our fathers say 'Why have the chiefs turned round?'

MWAMULENGA: Chief, we beg you, we thank you, indeed there is sickness. Is there anyone who says in their quarter there is much sickness (more than elsewhere)? Do we say something about sickness?

MWAMUNDA: No, Mwampiki, all of us who have come here are sick.

KILONGO: Yes, we are all rotting.

Mwaikambo commenting on this explained:

If there is sickness one may admit and say, 'It is I, I was angry on account of such and such.' Yes, indeed, they confess openly, because he who sees in his belly (=knows in his heart) that 'It is I who have done this' trembles when his fellows speak many words thinking, 'Perhaps they have seen me.' So he confesses. When he confesses he escapes, they only grumble at him saying, 'Don't do it again.' If someone admits the others say, 'It is he, but we have punished him.' I think that even in the old days he was not driven out, because they hope that, if he has confessed, the illness he caused will go away.

MWASALEMBA: Have you ever before heard of a hornbill eating a hen? We are horrified. Even the prophets did not speak of such an event. [787]

ANOTHER: Indeed, it has never before happened, we are glad that our chiefs have taken the initiative with these words.

ANOTHER: For this custom is old, it began long ago in the time of our fathers. It is the custom to give hope in the homesteads, that we may grow strong.

MWAMPIKI: Always, if the chief is ill it is said, 'Where are you, oh people?' All the homesteads watch over the chief when he is ill. [Mwaikambo commenting: It is said that people have the work of watching over their chief that no one may bewitch him, hence when he is ill they reproach people saying: 'Where are you?' Let the old customs be observed now (implying that they have left all the old customs and hence there is much sickness in the country).] [754] [177]

ANOTHER: There are some who say 'Let so-and-so die that I may move into his homestead. Let envy which brings sickness also go away.'

ANOTHER: If sickness appears let us tell the chief that we may all express astonishment together, asking where the illness has come from, then it will be light, if we all grumble together. [Mwaikambo commenting: [753]

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783 They say that complaining drives away illness, even though the witches
796 are not seen, and do not confess saying, 'It is we' yet they are ashamed
thinking 'People have caught me' and they desist.]
[753] MWAMULENGA: Catch anyone you see in your dreams. If someone is ill should we not all gather?
MWAMUNDA: Countrymen, give thanks that there are the chiefs.

And the company assented.

Then there was a discussion about the direction in which the chief should spit and people run. One pointing towards Tukuyu said: 'We always looked that way.' Another said: 'We always reached the boundary.'

[778] Mwafula (a village headman) came with his young son carrying a calabash of medicated water. Porokoto took a sip and spat out eastward, 'in the direction of the grove of Kabale, to the shades.'

[755] Mwamulenga shouted: 'Now we have prayed, the sickness is finished, we are present and watch over the homesteads. If we see anyone bringing sickness we will catch him and crush him on the sleeping mat.' There was a roar from the crowd, then all rushed yelling 300 yards or so eastward to the edge of the fields, and back again. Porokoto ran a little way with them, his malacca cane raised, then stopped, looking self-conscious, and strolled homeward. Everyone else scattered, chattering and laughing. On the way back we were greeted: 'You have prayed! Did you catch witches? Whom did you catch?'

Mwasalemba, senior brother of Porokoto and an expert in ritual, added one or two points in explanation:

In the old days we threw out the ashes, but we have not yet done so this time; we begin with the ritual on the pasture land and throw out the ashes afterwards. In the old days we threw them out of all the houses and put in fresh fire, new ash, saying 'Thou Kyala, thou shade,
[775] receive us, let us sleep here, we throw out the ashes, let sickness be
[753] slight.' Those who are angry now are our shades—those of the chiefs—they have gathered with the shades of the commoners. The medicated water means: 'Thou shade, you fathers, may we sleep, use this water for us if we are ill, may we be strong.' The water goes to the shades with these words.

Q.: Why must the women come?

M.: They call the war cry, we run swiftly, the women follow calling the war cry which means, 'You shade, we call the war cry for you that we may be pure—without anger—in our bellies, make us strong also, thou shade, may we also be pure in our bellies, this is your war cry . . .' The running and calling the war cry is to mock at him, to drive him

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away. We run with him, we leave him over there, we return and bring him in. We drive him off because he brought sickness; when we have done so we return and bring him again that we may be pure—without anger—and he also may be pure. We are with him all the time; we never throw him away. We always have the old one in the belly, an infant is he, and if I die I am with him, this earth (pointing to the earth of his homestead) never goes away, it is he. So if the crops fail when I have hoed I say: 'The shade is angry, this earth.' (*Papo nkulu tulinagwe bwila munda, mutukeke jo jujo, nalenga mfwile ndinagwe—umfu ugu gutijonga nakamo jo jujo—papo lenga ndemile nikuti 'unsyuka akalele umfu ugu' bo fisitile.*) Yes, in the death ritual also we drive him away with his sickness, and bring him back, always the old one.

After the ritual all have normal intercourse with their wives, but the night before there was no intercourse. How should we do evil on the mats when we have not yet blessed the shade? But when we have blessed him then all of us lie on our mats again. To lie together is to overstep the ritual, the shades are shocked and say, 'How can you do this? You agreed yesterday to bless the shades and you do this, why?' Then later, if a woman bears a child which cries at night, people say, 'You overstepped the ritual, pray for the child.' Or perhaps the woman is barren. We liken the water and the war cry to what we do on the mats—the water is the shade's and the war cry is his, it is his work. When we have spoken to the shade he comes into my belly—then I come together with my wife again.

This interpretation by Mwasalemba indicates that the blowing out of water is a symbol of emission. 'It is what men do.' It has been shown in *Rituals of Kinship* that the shades are driven out of the body in the sex act; that the shade and semen are identified; and that driving off the shade is a condition of health and sanity. The fact that blowing out water is *also* a symbol of confession—admission of anger, 'bringing out all that is within'—and supplication does not invalidate Mwasalemba's interpretation, for the same act is symbolized in many ways and the same symbol expresses events which are distinct, but associated. As in so many societies, abstinence is felt to be a necessary preparation for the celebration of a ritual, and the union, real or symbolic, of husband and wife the necessary conclusion.[1] All this is intelligible only in terms of the Nyakyusa ideas about procreation discussed in *Rituals of Kinship*. The shade is the vital force in men

[1] cf. I. Cunnison, 'Headmanship and Ritual of Luapula Villages', *Africa*, xxvi (1956), pp. 3-13; H. A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (1927), vol. i, pp. 320-22; J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (1911), pp. 48, 53, 55.

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and women, it is procreative power, fertility. That power is constantly expelled from the belly but returns again and by that expulsion and return men live.

There was a great deal of criticism from the conservatives because no sacrifice had been made.

MWAMUNDA: Now people are talking much saying, 'We have abandoned that which they did formerly, we are doing something else.' People have many dreams (gesture head on hand as if heavy with anxiety), many say: 'I have dreamed of the dead, they told me to sacrifice a cow, to pray, we did not pray properly, that is useless, it will not effect anything.' So we have told the chief saying: 'Let us kill a cow at the grave of Mwakan'ata,' he has agreed, but the cow has not yet come.

Formerly, on the night following the day of the prayer we should have eaten the sacrificial cow, the chief would have killed two cows and the headmen from different villages would have come and eaten by night, and drunk beer provided by the chief, in the house of the senior wife of the chief. . . . They ate a little meat, raw, the rest they roasted. Then in the morning, when they had eaten and were satisfied, they would go to clear out the house, to throw out the ashes, and to pray, as we prayed now, and to make new fire by friction in the pasture land. The village headman made fire with medicine which the chief gave him, the name of the medicine is Mbamba, it's a tree. To throw out the ashes means to clear out all the filth, the filth which the witches and the shades have brought to us—the filth that is sickness. . . . Do not the witches eat meat at the fire? Human flesh? Some roast at your fires your bodies which they have seized, some go home with the human flesh to their own fires, hence comes the filth of the ashes. The village headmen eat the sacrificial meat at night with the shades, they celebrate for them with the blood which goes beneath. . . .

If the chief has done something wrong, then those above [i.e. the village headmen] pray to those beneath saying, 'Let us help one another to punish him who has strayed, but we do not wish that he should die, let him be ill; perhaps then he will seek something to nourish us.' Again the night before the throwing out of the ashes they confess their anger and say: 'You beneath, this our child (the chief) has remembered us, there is no accusation against him now, may sickness go away from the country, and children sleep, let us all sleep and the cows calve. We greet those beneath.' In my childhood I was repeatedly surprised at night when my father came in, he had a little parcel of meat. 'Where have you been?' I asked. 'We have been praying.' But since I grew up and became a village headman, and was recorded as such [by the administration] we have never seen sacrificial meat.

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Mwandisi made a great deal of the fact that at the 'throwing out of the rubbish' the village headmen ate meat *raw*.

Formerly . . . we threw away the ashes and charred brands . . . that is to drive away the shades who warm themselves over the hearth in the house; they bring us sickness, let them warm themselves over there in the long grass! Also in the long grass there we killed meat, and the priests ate it *raw*: no one saw them doing that there in the long grass; we went by day with drums, people from all the homesteads, a moving multitude . . . then we came home . . . the priests remained with their wives, they threw away their bark-cloths, they cut off morsels of meat and ate them raw. Because the priests are witches it is they who ate raw meat before we chiefs came, the priests are witches. . . . The witches and shades gather and bring sickness together, we kill a cow in the grove, we drive them away. No, they do not eat raw meat in the grove, they cook it. But at the capital if the chief has killed a cow for men to eat the priests eat meat raw. We have seen them. I, Mwandisi, have seen Mwajole and Kalambo the senior village headmen eating raw meat at my place and my wives have seen them also.

'Yes', said one of his wives, 'we saw them and we ran away saying: "Well! Fancy doing it *openly*!" ' Mwandisi continued:

The senior village headmen are witches, children of those who ate raw food long ago. Some village headmen only rush to eat a cow we have killed, but some go to eat a person; those are the witches who eat raw meat!

The function of a chief is to feed his men on beef, and in doing so he placates the witches who are commoners and who, like their forefathers, prefer their meat raw. If they do not get beef then the witches eat men.[1]

(*c*) SMALLPOX

The prayer and 'clearing out [illegible] the rubbish', traditionally celebrated before an approaching epidemic, was described by an elderly Christian, Fibombe. It illustrates very clearly the combination of practical precaution—isolation—and magical protection, and also the idea that sickness was brought into the country by witches.

When the chief had heard that smallpox was coming, or dysentery, he said, 'Let us pray'. Before my baptism I saw it, in the country of the

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 56-4.

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796 783 753 Penja chief, Mwalukasa. He called all his people because he heard that smallpox was coming and said: 'Let us pray.' And he called his fellow chiefs, those of the same lineage, and said: 'Let this illness not come, may it go to other chiefs. . . . Listen! I am the chief! We have heard that smallpox is approaching, who is here who rejoices at his approach? Who is here who wishes that it should kill us?'

THE CHIEFS: We, we do not rejoice that it is coming, we reject it, chief Mwalukasa, may it pass by this homestead.

THE COMMONERS: And we also reject it, may it pass by our homesteads.

MWALUKASA: And I, I reject it, may smallpox not come into our country. If there be one who has relatives in a chiefdom where there is smallpox and they come to call him to a funeral let them stay at a distance, and not sleep here, let him not go near until the illness has passed by, at the end of the year. If you witches go to fetch it, you will kill your [754] fellows with whom you are chatting now. You will not enjoy my company or build with me, the chief, if you go and bring in smallpox and kill your fellows. We pray that it may pass. [For it is believed in this country that the witches go to bring in illness, or wild animals, from a distance.]

THE COMMONERS: Yes, indeed, may it pass by.

MWALUKASA: If you go to bury a brother in a country in which there is smallpox stand afar off, tie the cow you bring to a tree and call to them: 'Here is my cow for killing, come and take it.' Take your cow, but do not go into the homestead.

And the people did as he said. Then he told them to get ready for the ritual. He took his calabash cup and three other chiefs with [769] calabash cups followed him. They blew water and prayed to Kyala and the shades. Then the people were gathered together; and the chiefs, led by Mwalukasa, ran round facing each group in turn and blowing out water towards them; the men held their shields in front of them and when the chiefs blew they shook their shields violently, as if fighting.

When all was finished then Mwalukasa said: 'When you go home, [372] throw out the ashes and the fires; all make new fire with drills.' And they all did this.

Finally he had bamboos planted with medicine on the main roads between BuPenja and BuKukwe and BuPenja and BuNyiha. No one [755] ill with smallpox, or who had lived in contact with smallpox, was allowed to pass, unless he had been ill and recovered. I saw the one bamboo clump on the boundary of Nyiha and Penja country. No one passed it, it was very fearsome (*lusiya fye*).

As in cultivation there was a combination of ritual and science.

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(d) THE WILD PIG

Another sort of cleansing, unorganized, but concerning groups of neighbours, not kinsmen, is the 'blessing one another' (*ukuse-jana*) which takes place if a pig-hunt fails and quarrelling between the hunters is suspected to be the cause. It was described by a Christian, who had called his pagan neighbours to help him in tracking down a pig, which he had wounded during the previous night in his maize garden. It eluded them, hour after hour, though they were close upon it.

The neighbours began to think that the pig was sent by the shades (*sili zenkulu*)—they meant themselves. So they stopped hunting and gathered together to express their anger, and they said: 'Our fathers built together and drank beer together, why should this pig trouble us so? We don't suspect our friend who is a Christian for he has shown that he has no quarrel with us. Had he been angry he would not have called us to hunt with him. But if one of the rest of us has a quarrel with his fellow let him speak out, that we may all be free of anger (*bufe bele*) and seize the pig, for if we think hard thoughts about one another we shall not have strength to take the pig.' All said that they were in friendship with their fellows, so first one and then another took his spear and . . . laid it on the ground and said: 'I am without anger (*Une ndimwele ilele*).' All of them did this. One spoke to his fellow and said: 'Perhaps you are angry over that quarrel we had over beer?' But he replied, 'No.' Then the first man took up his spear from the ground and said, 'Father help us to catch this pig, if there was a quarrel, forgive, do not think of that with which I caused you to be angry. We bless one another, we are without anger.' Then all the others did the same, and they set off again to hunt.

This account, and the commentary of Mwaikambo on it, made it plain that the true translation of *bele* in such a context is 'without anger'. The communal rituals in which a whole chiefdom, or a group of neighbours, participate all have this one end, the cleansing of the group of quarrels by their open expression and explicit rejection.

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The negative rituals—the taboos which surround the procreative functions—disappear rather slowly, but a Christian father will enter his wife's hut to greet her after she has given birth to a child, and will eat food cooked by her a week or two later, which the pagans think extremely rash. An atmosphere of scepticism and experiment begins to develop; a few Christians spoke of breaking even the deeply-entrenched taboos surrounding menstruation 'to see what happened'. But that many Christians, especially women, feared the old taboos was apparent when one watched the behaviour of Christian daughters-in-law towards their fathers-in-law. In theory Christians disregarded the rules of avoidance if their fathers-in-law are Christian, or avoid 'only a little', but in practice a Christian woman is usually embarrassed and fearful if, by mischance, she meets her father-in-law face to face.[1]

Christians withdrew from the pagan communal rituals even more completely than they do from the rituals of kinship. No Christian takes any part in the sacrifices to the heroes, or at the graves of chiefs, or in cleansing the country, or in rain-making, or sprinkling the homesteads. As for the ritual of chiefmaking, from that also Christians withdrew. At the time we were first in BuNyakyusa only two chiefs were professing Christians, one of whom was already baptized before his installation. The 'coming out' performed for him was much curtailed since he refused to use the traditional medicines and, because of the difficulty over medicines, Christians were not acceptable as village headmen. In Ngonde, where the proportion of Christians was much greater, there were Christian headmen and chiefs, but the ritual of 'coming out' had disappeared altogether, and the Kyungu had delegated the celebration of all pagan rituals to one of his councillors who still believed in them, he himself being a sceptic.

There are tales of the early missionaries visiting the graves to challenge pagan belief. The pagans believe that they were confounded and some of the more conservative Christians also think that the terror of the graves drove the Reverend — *Jones* from Lufingo (*vide supra*, p. 93) and that *because* the Reverend — Kirton summoned the teachers and school children to a feast in the grove of Mlyungu, and killed 'a black cow' for them there, a season of piracy followed. 'Many people said: "He seems to have been advised by someone, why did he go to Mlyungu and sing

[1] For an account of such a meeting, cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 8–9.

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The festivities and display are most often linked, not to the Church ritual, but to the handing over of marriage cattle. Since the feasts of the puberty ritual are not celebrated, the Christians concentrate their energies on the *ukukwa*, when quantities of food are provided by the bride's family, and a crowd gathers to sing and dance. Then, some time after the cattle have been handed over, the bride is taken to her husband by a party of 'mothers' and friends, and a feast is provided by the groom. The pattern is very similar to that of the pagan handing over of marriage cattle (*ukukwa*) and bringing home the bride (*ukukala*), but new songs and dances replace the somewhat bawdy pagan ones, and the Christian youths, unlike the pagans, dance without spears. Often at a Christian wedding pagans also attend, and there are rival groups of dancers, pagans and Christians, between whom quarrels readily flare up. And when the new songs and dances of the Christians are copied by the pagans, as they sometimes are, then the Christians drop them, for they wish to be different.

The traditional examination of the bride by the 'mothers' and the giving of a bull if she goes to her husband a virgin, are maintained in the Christian community. The bull is usually killed as a feast for the mothers 'to say thank you for nourishing her', but there is, of course, no offering of the sacred meat to the ancestors, and sometimes the bull is not killed at all, or the groom brings shillings instead. As so often happens, a former ritual survives as ceremonial, an observance felt to be specially appropriate to the occasion, but no longer regarded as a condition of health or salvation.

When she is taken to her husband the bride is exhorted by her 'mothers' on her duties as a married woman. The traditional emphasis on separation from her mother is still there: 'You have left your mother, your husband is your mother, we have separated. . . .' And she is exhorted to be chaste, to obey her husband and answer him submissively, to be clean and diligent in her work, to be hospitable, and above all, as a Christian, to feed 'those from a distance'. Here the contrast between pagan and Christian ethics is emphasized: a pagan wife is only obliged to cook for kinsmen and neighbours, not strangers, but for a Christian to let a stranger starve is spoken of as a mortal sin.

The annual festivals of the Church are not so closely parallel to pagan communal rituals, for they were developed in a northern and temperate climate with a rhythm very different from the

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succession of 'sun', 'rain' and 'cold' into which the Nyakyusa year is divided; but there are parallels in the traditional prayers for rain, and at sunshine and harvest, which the Christians are quick to point out. What is totally new to the Nyakyusa is the division of a year into weeks, each with a day of rest and worship; but the conception once introduced has been accepted very quickly, and it is common to find pagans as well as Christians refraining from work in their fields on a Sunday. This is partly the effect of experience in European employment where Sunday is a day off, but partly, perhaps, it is because the idea of taboo is deeply embedded in pagan thought, and the teaching of some missionaries and converts has been in terms of taboo—of prohibitions connected with 'the Sabbath'.

In the Christian villages and village-sections, some at least of the converts gather for morning and evening prayer and on Sundays in their little mud Church or school-house, and once a month or once a quarter they gather in the main Church of the district. Besides this, those seeking baptism or preparing for confirmation gather for regular weekly instruction over a period of two or three years. There is thus regular common worship and instruction, and a strong sense of community between fellow Christians, particularly when they are in a small minority in an area.

But though the Christian is a member of a Church and worships in community, the emphasis (at least in the Protestant Churches in BaNyakyusa) tends to be on the individual, and some pagans spoke as if turning Christian implied an abandoning of public duties. Kasitile's remark that if it were not for his responsibility for the ritual he would be baptized, has already been quoted (p. 141), and the young priest of PaliKyala said the same. Whether these two were serious in wishing to become Christian is irrelevant here; they both believed that they had duties to their community which could not be fulfilled if they were Christians. The 'individualism' of young Christians is a matter of concern to many missionaries who are struggling to create among Christians that very sense of mystical union which pagan kinsmen exhibit.

The idea of the corporate nature of the worshipping group, with all that implies in mutual responsibility, is but one example of the profound similarity between the underlying ideas of pagan and Christian ritual that will be apparent to most readers. In the pagan tradition confession, oblation, and communion are as essential to the sacrifices at the graves as they are to the Christian eucharist;

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stranger came through the country our fathers lay in wait for him and killed him, but we are learning and have to learn to give him food and a night's shelter. Repent and let your hearts be washed!

We differ from other Christians because we baptize in Jordan, and they baptize in a dish in the church. They say we are wrong, but we say we do what Christ told us to do. They also say we are wrong to marry more than one wife. The words we say are just the same as the creed of those at Kabembe (i.e. Lutherans) with two differences, that of baptism and that of having more than one wife.

Communion services are celebrated half-yearly at each of several different centres by the leaders of the 'independent' Churches, and since they are unable to obtain wine, sweet tea or a light beer are used instead.

The members of Ngemela's Church contribute to buy a bull and rice and beer, and share a feast together after a communion service, and it is alleged by outsiders, though stoutly denied by members, that these are 'love feasts' at which members exchange wives,[1] to show that they are 'one body'. The African National Church also holds feasts after services and some outsiders say these too are 'love feasts', but outside opinion on the African National Church's feasts was much less unanimous than about Ngemela's feasts. It is certain that in Ngemela's church men and women drink sitting together in a manner not conventional among the Nyakyusa. Members of the mission Churches spoke of members of the independent Churches as living 'just like pagans' and averred that, despite their polygyny, their members ran off with other men's wives and were scarcely disciplined for doing so.

It is also clear that the would-be members are baptized almost immediately, with no period of testing and instruction such as is insisted upon by the mission Churches; that very many of them are members who have been suspended by other Churches; and that the 'pastors' have no special training for their task.

Nyasuru's church attracted more educated people than did Ngemela's and, in terms of Dr. Sundkler's classification,[2] his was a typical Ethiopian Church with its emphasis on African nationalism. Ngemela, the son of a minor chief, behaved much like a chief and attracted the less educated. He emphasized 'washing' —baptism by immersion—and repentance, and he was peripatetic

[1] This is also alleged of the Watch Tower in Northern Rhodesia, cf. Ian Cunnison, 'A Watch Tower Assembly in Central Africa', *International Review of Missions*, xl (1951), p. 467.

[2] B. G. M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets*, Lutterworth Press (1948), pp. 334-

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like most of the leaders of Zionist Churches in the south.[1] 797A

It is noticeable that the two 'independent' Churches have a more elaborate form of service than the Church from which their leaders have sprung, and Ngemela habitually wears conspicuous vestments. There is, of course, great variation between different denominations in the emphasis placed on ritual, some Protestants abjuring it and turning their very insistence on starkness and simplicity into a ritual in itself—a taboo. There seems to be a clear tendency in Southern Africa for 'independent' Churches to express themselves more and more in ritual and less in dogma. In this way they reduce the gap between themselves and the pagans, for the pagan religion is expressed almostly exclusively in ritual, whereas Christianity is expressed in creeds and confessions as well as in the rituals of the Church.

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(e) THE CONTRAST BETWEEN PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN

There are certain common elements in the rituals celebrated by pagans and Christians: some of the occasions are the same, and in the conceptions of sacrifice, of death and rebirth, of confession and cleansing, there are similarities; but there are also profound differences. The conception of life, immortality, replaces the preoccupation with fertility, for though most Nyakyusa Christians, like the pagans, regard celibacy as evidence of physical abnormality, and the conventional desire of a woman is to have six children—a quiverful in Nyakyusa eyes—yet fertility is no longer the end of all being, sought in every ritual. There are profound differences, too, in the values expressed in the rituals regarding sex relations, the range of moral obligations, and social change. In pagan thought polygyny is good—a man should have many children. Child marriage is defended on the ground that a girl 'gets accustomed to her husband' if she goes to him early, and homosexual relations between youths and younger men are tolerated since they have no wives and cannot marry if the older men are polygynists. What is upheld is the chastity of women, and a total separation of the sex activities of members of successive generations, expressed in the taboos limiting familiarity between mother and son, father and nubile daughter, father-in-law and daughter-in-law. In Christian thought it is the 'pure in heart' who 'see God' and this is interpreted by the mission Churches to imply monogamy. Only in the 'independent' African Churches is it asserted

797A 795K [842] [589] [595] [589] [838] [826] [561] [183] [595]

[1] The emphasis on healing, so common in the south, is absent.

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went away to work again and in time I earned four cows which I hid with friends far from home. My father knew nothing about them. Then I wrote to my father from Mwaesbe [about twenty miles from where his father lived] where I was working, saying that I had found a girl there, the daughter of a Christian, and please could I have the cows with which to marry her? My father said: "No, she lives too far away." ' Then later he found a Christian girl of whom his father approved and a satisfactory marriage was arranged.

A common topic of discussion among Christian women was whether parents should choose mates for their children, or leave them free to choose for themselves, for though traditionally a girl had to signify her consent to marriage, she was betrothed very young and her freedom of choice was small. The growing insistence on personal freedom in marriage is symptomatic of a radical change in the attitude towards persons.

The pagan rituals were the main occasions of recreation. It has been shown, in *Rituals of Kinship*, how pagan funerals and marriages are the occasion for feasting and dancing and display, and how the seclusion hut of a nubile girl is the gathering place for the young men and girls of the neighbourhood. Even a twin ritual is a festival with beer for the older men and some meat for everyone. The sacrifices at the graves were feasts for the leading men of the country, and the 'coming out' was the occasion of the greatest feast of the generation, and dances were practised for months ahead. Partly because of a change in sex morality, and partly because the meat and beer at pagan feasts are offered to the shades, Christians are largely excluded from these festivals. They may not participate in pagan dances, or join in the lewd songs, or attend the initiation hut of a girl, and they are partly debarred from the feasts of the pagans: certain of the Churches (notably the Church of Scotland and, for a time, the Moravians) forbid Christians to drink beer at all.

And the Christian rituals, though some of them are 'festivals of the Church', are scarcely celebrated as such. There has been a separation between ritual and recreation which has left a gap in the Christian community. It is true that the Christian young men and girls sing and dance at funerals and marriages, but the elders, for the most part, look on with disfavour, saying that dancing leads to adultery, and several of the dances introduced by

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leap in sympathy; as one of our friends explained, she found it hard to accept food from the neighbouring Safwa who were 'so dirty in their cooking'.

Both pagans and Christians pin their faith to resurrection, but the interpretations differ radically. To the pagan the shade is resurrected 'in the body of his child', it scarcely has any separate existence. To Christians the personality, the individual soul, is something indestructible and continuing. This theological difference is but one facet of a deep cleavage between the pagan view of a man and his relations with his group, and the Christian view.

Because the traditional religion is a cult of the shades, piety consists in doing just as father did. It is neglect of traditional rituals, departure from traditional ways, that is held to bring madness, sterility, or death. But Christianity is revolutionary; it is the yeast working in society to transform it. That is often forgotten in communities with a Christian tradition, but where the Gospel has been preached only for a generation and confessing Christians are but one in six, it is in men's minds all the time. The Nyakyusa could not be unaware that the Gospel implied changing their society.

In the pagan tradition the meticulous performance of the rituals is stressed: the right medicines, the right persons, the right order of events are all important. The attitude of mind of the participants matters also—if they are on bad terms the ritual will be ineffective—but goodwill and forgiveness alone are useless without the performance of the proper ritual. In the Christian tradition, as interpreted to us by Nyakyusa converts, it is the inward and spiritual attitude of the participants that is stressed.

Finally, all the pagan rituals are directed to driving off the shades or the heroes, whereas the Christian rituals are the 'means of grace', of coming near to God. Christians pray that the Holy Spirit should take up his abode within them; they seek to emulate the saints who 'walked with God'. Our Christian friends were quite clear about the contrast here between the pagan and Christian tradition: it is crystallized in the attitude to dreams: 'if a pagan dreams of converse (*ukwangala*) with shades, he fears death; 'if a Christian dreams of converse with God he rejoices greatly because it means he is gaining strength in Christianity.'

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Councils, the importance of establishing machinery for their appointment in chiefdoms where the 'coming out' is no longer held is obvious. [77] [422] [423]

The traditional communal rituals have not been dropped altogether, but their celebration is sporadic and not everyone supports them. Careful enquiries suggest that in less than half of the chiefdoms has the 'coming out' been celebrated when it was due. In the most conservative portion of the district, Selya, there were celebrations in 1952 and 1954, but even in that area a number of the ruling chiefs have never 'come out'. The omission is due partly to the desire of the old men to retain office, partly to the increase in population and the planting of coffee which makes any new deal in land unacceptable, and partly to the feeling of many that the old ritual is an anachronism, if not directly incompatible with their new faith in Christianity. Some chiefs who have not 'come out' would welcome a celebration; one such told us that 'if the "coming out" died chiefdomship would die'; but a young chief's personal wishes are not decisive in this matter. Sacrifices at the graves of chiefs and heroes are not so frequent as before, but they still occur at some graves in time of drought or other emergency. The Kings came to Lubaga in 1954, and they were expected to come and install Kasitile's heir in 1955. In 1954 also there were sacrifices at Mwenjonga (80) and Mwakisumbwe (30) for it was a season of scarcity. Rituals for cleansing the country and sprinkling the homesteads occur sporadically 'when occasion demands', but not annually in any chiefdom and never in some. And when celebrations do occur they do not unite the people of a chiefdom as they used to do. Christians oppose them and many non-Christians are also sceptical. [561] [796] [643] [782] [771]

In 1935 the traditional rituals celebrated by [illegible] chiefs [illegible] formed a coherent system. They were directed towards the shades and the heroes, as was manifest in the sacrifices and in the dramas of death and rebirth when those secluded 'dwelt with the shades' or were 'caught hold of' by Kyala.[1] The older participants were then conscious, in greater or lesser degree, of the symbolism implicit in the actions they performed. By 1955 the ritual cycle was nowhere celebrated in full: what remained were 'bits and pieces' of ritual, some of them fully intelligible without reference to the complete cycle. The link between the rites and the shades and the heroes was less clear, and the symbolism less [740] [746]

[1] [illegible]

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conscious. This disintegration of a former coherence, and a decreasing awareness of the meaning of symbols used, are perhaps characteristic of changing societies in Africa.

Despite the growth of the Christian Church, the great demand for schools, and the dropping of the old rituals directed to family shades and the heroes, belief in the power of medicines flourishes. Probably most deaths and misfortunes are still attributed to an enemy using either witchcraft or sorcery. The traditional belief in witchcraft is rejected by educated people, but belief in the power of medicines is general. Autopsies still take place and occasionally the poison ordeal is administered in secrecy; one case was mentioned which occurred in 1940. As we have seen, medicines have always been regarded as a potential instrument of individual competition. They are used in the rituals of kinship to ensure health, fertility, and good manners and morals; in the ritual of chieftainship to buttress authority, and in 'sprinkling the homesteads' to fertilize the fields; but also by individuals to steal the fertility of their neighbours' fields and to grow rich at the expense of their neighbours, and it is their use as an instrument of individual aggrandisement that is most talked of today. There were many reports of their use by rivals to office as chiefs, and the floods of 1955, which washed away the Mbaka bridge and caused a serious landslide on that river, were interpreted as incidents in a prolonged fight between chiefs who were rivals for the position of paramount. The deaths of the heir of one of them in 1953, and of the other chief himself in 1956, were also attributed to their duel with medicines.

Along with the political changes there has been a development of the Churches, more particularly of the Moravian Church, which is now largely self-supporting, with growing congregations served by African ministers.[1] Until 1938 the two main Protestant missions in Nyakyusa valley, the Moravian and Lutheran, were staffed by Germans and their funds came mainly from Germany. The war meant the withdrawal of the missionaries and the cutting off of funds. After a lapse of three years one Moravian missionary, and later one Lutheran, came to take charge of the missions and they were reinforced by other missionaries after the end of the war, but the whole policy in both missions is to build up self-supporting churches staffed by African pastors.

The work of the White Fathers mission was not interrupted by

[1] Change in Ngonde is not discussed.

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CHAPTER XIV

RELIGION AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

182 In this chapter we shall seek to show how the traditional communal rituals both reflect and maintain the traditional political structure, and to consider in what measure the change from paganism to Christianity compels a change in other aspects of the society, or, alternatively, how far the economic and political changes taking place among the Nyakyusa compel a change in religion.

182 773 769 643 The heroic myths are the charter for chiefdomship. The heroes from whom the chiefs are descended are pictured as creators and benefactors, the authors of fertility and civilized living. But myth and ritual also entrench the rights of commoners and unify people of different stocks by asserting their complementary diversity. No ritual can be celebrated without the participation of commoner priests. They 'speak out' at rituals and bring public opinion directly to bear on the chief, whose own health is held to depend upon their goodwill; at the same time the whole country looks to the chief as the source of fertility in man and beast and field.

182 643 796 782 Ritual was the integrating force with the widest range in the traditional society. Independent chiefs, even those whose people were culturally as different as the Nyakyusa and Kinga, joined in sacrifice to Lwembe and Kyalo and were mystically dependent upon one another. As Kasitile put it 'the Kinga come (to Lubaga) both when there is trouble in our land and in theirs'. In Ngonde the 'divine king', the Kyungu, who controlled a flourishing trade in ivory, developed secular as well as ritual functions and emerged as a paramount chief, but in the Nyakyusa valley the ritual bond had no secular backing save the exchange of iron and salt for food, which linked Kinga and Nyakyusa in a tenuous partnership. The sacrifices to the Lwembe did not exclude war between chiefs who acknowledged him, nor did sacrifice to their common ancestor exclude war between Mwaipopo (1781) and Mwalioje (1843), but the necessity of co-operation in sacrifice compelled later reconciliation. Perhaps the insistence on the sacredness of the heroes and their living representatives, the elaborate ritual of

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chieftainship, and the dependence upon medicines as a means of enforcing law were connected with the ineffectiveness of secular authority. Certainly the Kyungu's emergence from seclusion, and the dropping of the taboos which surrounded him were connected with his acquisition of economic power; but we know too little of the conditions that make for elaboration of ritual to postulate any general connexion between the absence of ritual in public life and the effectiveness of secular authority.

The cycle of sacrifices to the heroes and dead chiefs among the Nyakyusa is more than an ancestor cult, for it includes non-relatives among its priests and beneficiaries; but it has many of the features of an ancestor cult, among them the identification of piety with conservatism. A good man follows exactly in the footsteps of his father who becomes his god. This is reconciled with a myth of a new beginning, ten generations ago, when civilized life came to the Nyakyusa valley, and the new beginning is celebrated each generation with the 'coming out' of the young chief and his contemporaries.

All Nyakyusa rituals are cathartic in the sense that they make explicit and seek to dissipate, by their very expression and rejection, certain anti-social tendencies. In the Nyakyusa view the root of evil is 'anger in the heart' unadmitted and corrosive, and only by an open confession can it be overcome.[1] Hence in every situation of misfortune, public or private, men are pressed to 'speak out' (*ukunyo*) and admit their anger. At the 'coming out' the conflict of generations is expressed in the prolonged debate over the date of the celebration and the detailed arrangements, and in the dancing and slaughter of cattle, and is finally resolved when authority and land are handed over to the young men by their fathers. The fissiparous tendencies of a chiefdom are made explicit and canalized in constitutional form by the division of the old chief's country into two, under his senior sons; and criticism of the young chiefs is made explicit in the formal admonition by the father's village headmen. The rejection of conflict is clearest at the annual purification when men throw out the ashes contaminated by family bickering and the cannibalism of witches, and *fight* one another 'that the homesteads may be peaceful'. This fighting is 'to bring out war from within (*ukunyo*)',

[1] cf. Good Company, pp. 99–101. The belief that a witch to recover must confess if the guilty one to recover was the reason for the torture of witches in many African societies.

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and is therefore to be interpreted as 'confusion of anger', rather than as 'rebellion'.

Sometimes there is an expression of opposite tendencies, both implicitly approved. The sacrifice to the heroes and at the graves of the chiefs emphasizes seniority and precedence, and expresses the dependence of junior on senior kinsmen, but the myth, recalled in every celebration, tells of the surpassing power of the son or younger brother in the beginning of time, and the junior brother of a chief often holds office as a priest. There is the drama of driving away the chiefs and bringing him back transformed, which is so characteristic of the rituals of kinship and appears again at the cleansing of the country. Such contradictions are doubtless expressions of ambivalent attitudes among the participants themselves, and of the attempt in ritual to reconcile conflicting social principles—in these instances authority with the rights and duties of juniors, and change with continuity.

In a society without written records legal certainty depends very largely on publicity. This is apparent in the law relating to marriage contracts and family inheritance,[1] and still more so in the law of the chiefdom. The ritual of 'coming out' celebrates radical changes in social status, and the public recognition of the leaders, members, and territorial boundaries of villages, as well as of the heirs to chiefdomship. Thus certainty in these matters is assured. There is no positive value of the co-exigency of father and son (as in ancient Egypt),[2] but the installation of the young chiefs before the death of their father serves to mitigate conflicts over the succession. Continuity over village boundaries and village leadership often appears when the ritual has not been celebrated, for there is no public definition to refer to.

How close is the link between religious belief and practice and social structure? There is no doubt that the sacrifices to the dead chiefs and heroes and the traditional rituals of kinship supported the former political and kinship structure of the Nyakyusa. Their performance compelled co-operation between kinsmen,[3] between neighbouring chiefs, and between chiefs and people. How far then does the change in religion, begun when the first Christian convert professed his new faith, compel a change in the social

[1] Godfrey Wilson, 'An Introduction to Nyakyusa Law', *Africa*, vol. iii, (1930), p. 69.
[2] H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp. 100–6.
[3] *cf. Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 130 seqq., 207.

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particular symbols are tied to a particular social structure; the poet makes his choice within the whole range of the familiar.

The impetus to change has come both from the religious field and from the secular. For example, the pressure towards monogamy among the Nyakyusa has been religious; given plentiful land and cash crops additional wives are an economic asset, not a liability. In this respect the contrast with the Gikuyu in South Africa, where families are dependent for food on wage-earners in towns, and no man can support two families,[1] is marked. On the other hand, the decay of Nyakyusa age-villages is primarily due to economic pressure, though it is facilitated by the insistence of Christians that there is no danger in father-in-law and daughter-in-law meeting one another. The first generation of Christians living on mission land built villages apart for their sons, despite the teaching that avoidance of a father-in-law by his daughter-in-law was foolish, if not sinful. But a radical change in proper observance of ritual avoidance is brought about by the general practice of going out to work for long periods, and the competition for coffee and rice-lands, which makes the territorial separation of fathers and sons impossible. As we have shown, young men going to work commonly leave their wives in their fathers' homesteads, valuing the support and supervision given them there above the old stringency of avoidance and, where land is scarce and valuable, fathers do not move aside each generation to make way for their sons. Avoidance between father-in-law and daughter-in-law continues only in an attenuated form.

From German times onward by a European government has compelled a modification of the traditional sacrifices to the heroes and of the ritual of chieftainship. How the Kinga priests came to Lubaga 'in secret' and how they failed to instal a new Lucumbe after the death of Mwakibinga about 1914 has been described. Killing a child to anoint a drum or make medicine for the fields, compelling a man to accept a dangerous office, killing chiefs because they are ailing, or plucking off their nails before they die; all these are actions which are held, and must be held, to be 'contrary to natural justice' by any Western government. Here the change in political organization compels a change in ritual and there is evidence that belief in the traditional forms is much diminished, though not dead. The European government also

[1] Rattenbury-Brock Survey, Vol. I, *The Economy of a Native Reserve*, by D. H. Houghton and E. M. Walton; vol. II, *Social Structure*, by M. Wilson *et al.*

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177 found the administration of the poison ordeal, driving out people
649 alleged to be witches, and killing supposed sorcerers 'contrary to
● 176 natural justice'. Here the change is not in the celebration of a ritual
but in the execution of 'justice' based on traditional religious beliefs.

The early missionaries were very important as employers of
177 labour and a market for produce; indeed at one time they were the
sole source of western trade-goods among the Nyakyusa. For long
they provided the only skilled medical attention. They were the
source of new learning, teaching, from the start, reading and
writing and new manual skills, and the link between learning and
religion, so familiar in the history of Europe, is still strong. There-
fore acceptance of Christianity *tended* to go along with acceptance
of its new economic and political structure, but it was never
identified with it. Already in the thirties a popular song contrasted
Christians with Europeans, and African nationalism was finding
expression in 'independent' Churches.

Isolation fits as well with the new economic and political
178 structure as Christianity, and it has been argued elsewhere that
177 one of the characteristics of the change from a small-scale, isolated,
649 self-sufficient people to a large-scale society is increasing secular-
ism. The evidence from BaNyakyusa does not so far support this,
but here is a *separation* of religious and other activities. Religion is
not interwoven with the modern political system as it was with
the old. Traditionally the fusion between ritual and political
activities was almost complete; village headmen became priests
as they grew old, and chiefs became gods. Now there is a separa-
tion between Church and state, between Government and mission,
which co-operate closely only in the organization of schools. It is
true that Christian congregations pray regularly for 'those set in
authority over us', but for the most part religious ritual does not
enter into state functions. The flag is hoisted and saluted at
stations and resorts at administrative and military centres; certain
occasions, such as the Queen's birthday or the visit of the Queen's
representative, the Governor, are celebrated with secular cere-
monial. Only at the Coronation, to which African representatives
from Rungwe district were sent, did the state ceremonial and the
Christian ritual merge.[1] Political tension is not now directly

[1] R. Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, Chicago (1941); *A Village that Chose Progress*, Chicago (1950).

[2] 'The entire solemnity of the Coronation, from start to finish, is distinctly a religious rite.' Canon Charles Smyth, 'The Coronation Rite', *The Listener*, 28th May 1953.

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631 628 Age-villages combined to form a chiefdom under the hereditary chief, *mwanyale*, but active co-operation between villages thus associated was often slight; indeed in the larger chiefdoms there commonly existed latent animosities which might break out in raiding or even civil war. The integrity of these larger chiefdoms was weak – for example, when the Nyakyusa were attacked by Sangu and Ngoni war-parties, and later by the Germans, villages of the same chiefdom conspicuously failed to join in common defence. Similarly the land affairs of one village were no concern of any other, and each jealously guarded its own rights.

631 629 Many of the chiefdoms was large; smallness of scale is typical of Nyakyusa political organization and social attitudes. In 1955 the smallest indigenous chiefdom contained only 36 men. In 1948 35,700 people were divided amongst about 18 indigenous chiefs, but undoubtedly had not the Colonial Government frozen the system there would have been rather more – at least five more. Today there are 12 recognized "administrative chiefs", amongst whom five have each less than 2,000 people under them, and the largest chiefdom contains fewer than 10,000 people – the average is just over 4,000 people.

631 341 Nevertheless the chiefdom, the collection of villages, was important, because in the creation of the chiefdom villages were created, and in its development the villages developed, matured and died away. A village survived only so long as its members lived and by the nature of the age-organization there was but little possibility of the recruitment of new members, for villagers' sons left to form their own new villages. Their sons eventually came to comprise the core of the new chiefdoms.

631 342 In connection with the construction of a Nyakyusa village and with land tenure, the significant feature of the chiefdom was its establishment, together with the induction of a new chief, at the great "coming-out" ceremony, *ukwimba*. In brief, each chief was succeeded by two of his sons – the eldest son of each of the senior houses of the chief, i.e., of his first two wives. At the "coming-out" ceremony, when the sons were still young men and their father was not a particularly old man, the old chiefdom was divided into two, each part coming under one of the new young chiefs. Before this critical occasion – at which much important ritual was performed – the younger sons of the old chiefdom had already moved away from their fathers' villages and had established their own incipient villages nearby, each one consisting a group of comrade. A Nyakyusa boy from the age of about seven years could not continue to live with his father and mother, but, in company with his agemates, built his own hut on a site adjacent to the main village as indicated by the fathers' headmen. Until the "coming-out" ceremony these 'youths' villages came under the control of the old village headmen; but with the induction of the new chiefs they achieved independent status, each with its own headmen appointed from among its members by the old headmen. Each new village was allocated a new building site and a new arable area, and quite commonly the old villagers, the elder men, moved away a little in order to give the younger men adequate access to the land, for it was considered that the young men's needs for land were paramount.

631 178 633 648 After this wholesale reorganization of the old chiefdoms, where new villages were established and new boundaries demarcated,[1] the old chief himself, the old headmen and the older men (the "fathers") gradually retired from active public life. The old chief was supposed to commit suicide after a time (or was quietly killed off) in order to leave the field clear for his son; the old headmen became the religious and ritual leaders of the new chiefdoms, with the honour of elder statesmanship, and the old men's

1. See Mrs. Tew's op. cit. [illegible]